

SB208. The Arc Maryland.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Ande Kolp

Position: FAV



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T 410.571.9320
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SB 208: Human Services – Maryland
Assistive Technology Program –
Establishment

January 29, 2025
Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) is **highly valued** by people throughout the state who are affiliated with The Arc Maryland.

MDTAP is operated by the Maryland Department of Disabilities to provide help to individuals in need of tech for independence. MDTAP services support access to assistive technology (AT) devices, and provide AT demonstrations, short-term device loans, trainings, presentations, information and assistance, and low interest financial loans for the purchase of a variety of AT and home modifications. MDTAP employees are knowledgeable, patient, and helpful with unmatched customer service. They are a shining example of what a government program should look like.

This bill would officially establish the Maryland Assistive Technology Program in the Department of Disabilities to provide assistive technology devices and services to individuals with disabilities, and establish the Assistive Technology Services Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund within the Department. There should not be a new fiscal impact to the state created by this legislation: the program will continue to operate as it has for several years.

It is important that we enshrine MDTAP and its purpose and responsibilities in statute for its continued operations and preservation.

We urge a favorable report on SB 208.

Sincerely,
Ande Kolp, Executive Director
The Arc Maryland, 443-851-9351, akolp@thearcmd.org



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MDOD_SB0208_FAV_01.29.25.pdf

Uploaded by: Anne Blackfield

Position: FAV



DATE: January 29, 2025

BILL: SB0208 – Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

COMMITTEE: Finance

POSITION: Favorable

Dear Chair Beidle,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is pleased to submit this letter in support of SB0208 Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment.

This legislation formally recognizes the Maryland Department of Disabilities' Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP). MDTAP was formed in 1989 to implement federal grant activities related to assistive technology for people with disabilities. The grant was most recently reauthorized in 2022 under the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act (Pub. L. 117-263, § 5401_*et. seq.*, referred to in this document as the "AT Act").

Assistive technology (AT) is critical to helping children and adults with disabilities obtain education, maintain employment, and live safely at home. MDTAP maintains AT lending libraries; provides AT demonstrations and trainings; helps individuals locate used no- or low-cost devices; and operates a low-interest financial loan program to help individuals purchase new devices. MDTAP's services are available for free statewide and can be accessed by any Marylander with a disability, including those who cannot currently receive (or are ineligible to receive) services from other agencies such as DORS or DDA. MDTAP also provides information and training to families, educators, and others who support people with disabilities.

MDTAP receives 100% of its funding from a formula-funded federal grant, which has increased by approximately \$15,000 per year. This has not kept pace with rising personnel and technology costs. MDTAP is seeking alternative ways to sustain and grow its program without requesting a State appropriation; this legislation presents one such alternative.

Once codified, MDTAP will be able to perform AT activities beyond those specified in the federal grant, such as AT evaluations and customized device training. The legislation also creates a special fund for the program to allow it to collect reasonable fees for the new AT activities it will perform. MDTAP will continue to offer its AT Act services free of charge. Performing additional services on a fee-for-service basis would allow MDTAP to offset personnel costs, which would allow increased investment in the services it offers for free.

We request a favorable report on this legislation. Thank you for your support of MDTAP and the thousands of Marylanders with disabilities who continue to benefit from its services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol A. Beatty".

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary

IL Written Testimony - SB 208 - Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Chris Kelter

Position: FAV



SB 208: Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

Testimony of the Maryland Independent Living Network

SUPPORT

Senate Finance Committee, January 29, 2025

The Maryland Independent Living Network is a coalition of the Maryland Statewide Independent Living Council and the seven Maryland-based Centers for Independent Living (CIL). CILs are created by federal law. CILs work to enhance the civil rights and quality of services for people with disabilities. There are seven CILs located throughout Maryland, operated by and for people with disabilities. CILs provide Information and Referral, Advocacy, Peer Support, Independent Living Skills training, and Transition Services to individuals with disabilities in their communities.

The Independent Living Network submits this written testimony in **support** of SB 208.

SB 208 codifies the federally funded Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) into statute as the Maryland Assistive Technology Program in the Department of Disabilities (MDOD). The bill also expands the provision of assistive technology and addresses resources to aid the expansion of the program.

Assistive technology is a broad term for assistive products, related systems and related services that help individuals with disabilities and older individuals maintain or improve their independence and functioning related to communication, hearing, mobility, self-care, cognition, and vision. Assistive technology ensures that individuals with disabilities can focus on their health, well-being, as well as inclusion and participation in the community of their choice.

Assistive technology products can be physical products such as wheelchairs, glasses, prosthetic limbs, white canes, and hearing aids but also include digital solutions such as speech recognition or time management software and captioning. Furthermore, most individuals with disabilities and older individuals who use assistive technology typically use more than one product and/or service; accordingly, appropriate and individualized assistive technology makes integrated services important.

Codifying the existing program as the Maryland Assistive Technology Program ensures that eligible Marylanders with disabilities have access to the assistive technology that allows them to communicate and live independently in the communities of their choice.

The Maryland Independent Living Network appreciates the consideration of these comments.

The Maryland Independent Living Network strongly **supports** SB 208 and urges a **favorable** report.

Contact Information:

Chris Kelter, Executive Director
Accessible Resources for Independence
443-713-3914
ckelter@arinow.org

Danielle Bustos, MDYLF Coordinator
Independence Now
240-898-2189
dbustos@innow.org

Written Testimony Bill SB0208 D.B..pdf

Uploaded by: Devra Brace

Position: FAV

1/27/2025

To whom it may concern:

I'm writing as both a member of the Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP) Advisory Council and as a licensed audiologist in the state of Maryland in support of SB0208 "Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment." At this time, MDTAP is able to provide Marylanders with many excellent assistive technology resources which I have personally seen benefit my own patients. The codification of MDTAP will only help us expand the reach of our services and make assistive technology even more accessible for those that would benefit from it the most. I am looking forward to seeing this expansion of access for all Marylanders with disabilities, including as a resource for my own patients with hearing aids to improve their quality of life and general expansion of accessibility.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Devra Brace". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Devra" being more prominent than the last name "Brace".

Devra Brace, Au.D., CCC-A

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB208.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

January 29, 2025

Senate Bill 208

**Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment
Senate Finance Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 208 establishes the Maryland Assistive Technology Program in the Department of Disabilities; providing the purpose of the Program is to increase access to assistive technology services and devices for individuals with disabilities, support the State's efforts to provide assistive technology services and devices to persons with disabilities of all ages, including underrepresented populations, and ensure statewide access to assistive technology lending libraries; establishing the Assistive Technology Services Fund.

Improving access to assistive technologies is essential for enhancing the quality of life and success of individuals with disabilities in Maryland. Assistive products include a wide range of physical tools, such as wheelchairs, glasses, prosthetic limbs, white canes, and hearing aids, as well as digital solutions like speech recognition software, time management tools, and captioning services.¹ These technologies significantly reduce the challenges of daily activities, fostering independence and improving overall well-being.

However, barriers such as limited access, lack of awareness, and insufficient funding prevent many from obtaining these essential tools. This program is vital to addressing these barriers and ensuring that individuals can access assistive technologies tailored to their unique needs. Often, employers or insurance providers fail to connect individuals with adequate technology or cover the associated costs, leaving many without the tools they need to thrive.

For children with disabilities, access to assistive technologies can be life-changing, particularly in areas like speech and language development. These tools not only support individual growth but also strengthen families by equipping them with the resources necessary to provide care

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/assistive-technology>

and services. By investing in these innovations, Maryland can empower the vulnerable disability population to achieve greater independence and an improved quality of life.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 208**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Support Senate Bill 0208 Accessible Resources for

Uploaded by: Erin Ashinghurst

Position: FAV



Erin Ashinghurst

Deputy Director of Programs and Services
Accessible Resources for Independence
1406B Crain Highway South
Glen Burnie, Maryland 21061

January 27, 2025

Chair, Finance Committee Senator Pamela Beidle
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair and Members of the Finance Committee,

I'm writing to share my support for **Senate Bill 0208**, Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment. As someone with years of experience helping people with disabilities access resources and live more independently, I know how life-changing assistive technology can be.

In my current role at Accessible Resources for Independence, I have worked with hundreds of people with disabilities annually. I've seen how assistive technology—like communication devices, mobility aids, and other tools—can eliminate barriers and our community members the opportunity to live fuller, more independent lives. However, I've also seen how many people struggle to afford or access the essential assistive technology for healthy living. This bill would establish a program to make assistive technology more available and affordable for Marylanders with disabilities. It's a step forward to ensure people have the tools they need to communicate, get around, and fully participate in their communities.

This program is so important because it builds on Maryland's commitment to inclusion and equity. I've worked on statewide advocacy efforts, and I know how critical it is to invest in programs that directly improve access and opportunity for people with disabilities. I urge the committee to support this bill and help Maryland become a leader in assistive technology access. Thank you for your time and for considering this key step.

Sincerely,

Erin Ashinghurst, MS
Deputy Director of Programs and Services
Accessible Resources for Independence

DRM FAV SB0208.HB0214 MD Assistive Technology Prog

Uploaded by: Gabriel Rubinstein

Position: FAV

FINANCE COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 208: Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment
January 29, 2025
Position: Support

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), Maryland's federally mandated Protection & Advocacy agency, is dedicated to advancing the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM is pleased to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 208, which aims to establish the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDATP) within the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

This bill seeks to codify the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDATP) in state law, enabling it to expand its services to include fee-based offerings such as assessments, customized training, and digital accessibility evaluations. These enhanced services will help to address critical gaps in the state's assistive technology (AT) resources while fostering the MDATP's long-term sustainability. By advancing SB 208, Maryland reaffirms its commitment to increasing access to AT devices and services, empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve greater independence and actively participate in their communities.

AT empowers people with disabilities to enhance their ability to manage daily living, work, education, communication, and recreation. Through the MDATP's statewide AT lending libraries, Marylanders can access and borrow equipment such as alternative and augmentative communication devices, reading machines, assistive listening devices, environmental controls, and adaptive games. This flexibility minimizes financial risks and supports informed decision-making by allowing individuals to try equipment before committing to a purchase. Once they identify what works best, they can pursue funding through insurance, choose to purchase the item independently, or even obtain the item through a re-use center free of charge.

Securing AT through public or private insurance can be an arduous process, often requiring individuals to navigate complex approval systems and pursue multiple appeals to obtain even basic equipment. The MDATP serves as a vital resource for those unable to access the AT they need through insurance, whether due to coverage denials or the need for specialized devices that fall outside the scope of medical coverage. Additionally, the MDATP provides critical support for uninsured individuals who would otherwise have no access to these essential tools. By increasing funding and solidifying the MDATP as a permanent program, this legislation ensures equitable access to the AT devices and services that empower individuals with disabilities to thrive.

At DRM one of our primary goals is to improve access to AT for Marylanders with disabilities. Each year, we support numerous clients in obtaining the AT they need to enhance their independence and fully participate in their communities. Unfortunately, there remains a significant lack of affordable AT options for low- and middle-income individuals with disabilities in Maryland. To bridge this gap, DRM frequently refers clients to the MDATP for essential services such as access to the re-use program, AT counseling, and borrowing equipment to find the right fit. It is crucial to nurture and expand programs like the MDATP to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities are not left behind in accessing these critical resources.

Notably, this bill establishes the Assistive Technology Services Fund to sustainably finance essential services such as training, digital accessibility evaluations, and remediation. As vital aspects of daily life—such as government programs, employment, and education—continue to shift online, it is imperative that all Marylanders, including those with disabilities, are included in these digital spaces. By supporting this fund, Maryland reaffirms its commitment to creating a more accessible and equitable digital environment for everyone.

DRM is also proud to support this bill as the MDATP is designed to prioritize underrepresented populations, ensuring that all Marylanders—regardless of background or resources—have access to assistive technology. By investing in AT, Maryland will empower individuals with disabilities to live more independently, engage fully in their communities, and achieve greater equity and inclusion across all aspects of life.

DRM strongly supports Senate Bill 208 and respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on this critical legislation. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabriel Rubinstein
Managing Attorney
Disability Rights Maryland
GabrielR@DisabilityRightsMD.org
443-692-2483

Support for Bill Number SB0208 - Maryland Assistiv

Uploaded by: Joan Green

Position: FAV

Joan Green
Owner, Innovative Speech Therapy
Montgomery County, MD
Joan@innovativespeech.com
301-602-2899
1-27-25

To: Maryland State Legislature

Subject: Support for Bill Number SB0208 - Maryland Assistive Technology Program Establishment

I am writing to you as a long-standing resident of Maryland and as the owner of Innovative Speech Therapy, a business that has been based in Montgomery County for over 30 years. Our mission is to empower individuals with disabilities and aging adults through the use of assistive technology, enhancing their quality of life and enabling greater independence.

It has come to my attention that Maryland residents are currently facing significant disadvantages in accessing and implementing assistive technology compared to our neighbors in states such as Pennsylvania and New Jersey. This disparity has profound implications, not only for individuals' autonomy but also for their ability to participate fully in society.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities has proposed a departmental bill, SB0208, which seeks to codify the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) in State Statute. This bill is a monumental step forward as it also seeks to authorize MDTAP to charge for essential services such as AT Assessments, customized AT Training, and Digital Accessibility Assessments.

These services are critical in addressing the current needs gap in our state and will provide our program with the sustainability needed to continue supporting our community effectively. As someone who has witnessed first-hand the transformative impact that appropriate assistive technology can have, I strongly support this bill.

Enabling MDTAP to offer these services will not only enhance our ability to serve Marylanders with disabilities but also ensure that our state remains a leader in promoting inclusivity and accessibility. By supporting SB0208, you are advocating for a Maryland where everyone, regardless of their physical, cognitive or communicative capabilities, has the opportunity to live their life to the fullest.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this crucial matter. I urge you to support SB0208 and help Maryland advance towards a more inclusive and accessible future for all its residents.

Sincerely,

Joan Green
Owner, Innovative Speech Therapy

1.27 SB 208- Human Services - Maryland Assistive T

Uploaded by: Lonia Muckle

Position: FAV



SB 208 - Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

Senate Finance Committee

January 29, 2025

SUPPORT

Chair Beidle, Vice-Chair and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 208. This bill will ensure individuals with disabilities have enhanced access to assistive technology devices and services.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

CASH connects families to critical community resources, and we recognize the profound impact assistive technology can have on individuals with disabilities. Many of the families we serve face complicated challenges due to accessibility barriers. Increased access to assistive technology ensures that these families can access the tools they need to thrive, whether in securing employment, managing daily activities, or accessing education and social services.

SB 208 establishes The Maryland Assistive Technology Program which is designed to expand statewide access to assistive technology, support underrepresented communities, and promote economic self-sufficiency by addressing accessibility barriers. This will increase equitable access to assistive technology devices for underrepresented and low-income populations. These devices play a key role in enabling individuals to pursue education, employment, and independent living, thereby enhancing their financial stability and quality of life.

The Assistive Technology Services Fund ensures a sustainable mechanism to finance assessments, training, and device lending, while encouraging innovation and resource optimization. This fund is an investment in long-term solutions for accessibility and inclusion. Assistive technology supports workforce participation for individuals with disabilities by mitigating barriers to employment and education. Senate Bill 208 represents a vital step toward a more inclusive and equitable Maryland.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 208.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

SB208.DDCoalition.FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Senate Finance Committee

January 29, 2025

SB 208: Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment

Position: **Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition (DD Coalition) is comprised of five statewide organizations that are committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families. As such, the DD Coalition supports SB 208.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Formally recognizes the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) as a program of the Maryland Department of Disabilities in State law.
- Allows MDTAP to generate revenue to be placed in a special fund so more people get assistive technology (AT) at no cost to the state.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **MDTAP helps connect people with disabilities to AT devices that help them live, learn, work, and play in their homes and communities.** MDTAP maintains AT lending libraries, provides AT demonstrations and trainings, connects people to no cost or low cost used AT, and operates a low-interest loan program to help people buy new AT, adapted vehicles, and home modifications.
- **Allows MDTAP to offer specialized AT services in addition to the federal grant activities.** MDTAP is 100% federally funded – through grant funding – and authorized under the Assistive Technology Act to provide services statewide with a limited budget from the federal government.
- **More Marylanders with disabilities benefit.** By recognizing MDTAP in state law, and allowing MDTAP to charge reasonable fees for these additional services, more Marylanders with disabilities can benefit from the services MDTAP provides.

Contact: Rachel London, Chair, DD Coalition: RLondon@md-council.org



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**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**
CREATING CHANGE · IMPROVING LIVES

217 E Redwood Street
Suite 1300
Baltimore, MD 21202



7000 Tudsbury Road
Windsor Mill, MD 21244

SB 208 MWE FAV final.pdf

Uploaded by: Rev. Ray Raysor

Position: FAV



**Metropolitan
Washington Ear**

Committee: Senate Finance Committee

Bill Number: Senate Bill 208 – Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment

Hearing Date: January 29, 2025

Position: Support

Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc. (MWE) located in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Maryland. MWE provides reading and information services, and independent living skills training for blind, visually impaired, and physically disabled people who cannot effectively read print, see plays, watch television programs and films, or view museum exhibits. Established in 1974, we've been providing quality services throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia for more than 50 years. As an organization that serves the disabled community and fights for access for our community, we **SUPPORT** SB 208.

SB 208 would establish the Maryland Assistive Technology Program in the Department of Disabilities. This program would increase access to assistive technology services and devices for individuals with disabilities of all ages; including underrepresented populations and ensure statewide access to assistive technology lending libraries. Finally, the legislation would establish the Assistive Technology Services Fund.

Blind and visually impaired users benefit from the use of assistive technologies. It allows them to be on a level playing field with users not affected by low vision impairment. These technologies help create a more inclusive and equitable environment for everyone involved. Some of the most significant benefits of assistive technology for blind and visually impaired people include access to information, increased independence, enhanced communication, educational and employment opportunities, and social and communication inclusion.

There are dozens of assistive technology solutions and technologies that individuals who are blind and visually impaired use daily. These assistive technology devices include magnifiers, speech-to-text software, mobility aids, screen readers, and braille displays – to name a few. These devices help people with visual impairments access information, use technology, and navigate their environment. Yet, these devices tend to be unaffordable for many, which causes a significant barrier to accessing information and reading independently, as braille displays can be quite expensive, ranging from several hundred dollars to thousands of dollars — putting them out of reach for many individuals with low incomes.¹ If passed, SB 208 would help

¹ <https://solve.mit.edu/solutions/68736#:~:text=braille%20from%20becoming%20commonplace.%20Majority%20of%20blind,access%20to%20rare%20books%20thus%20eventually%20never>

to close gaps in the access to assistive technology devices for many Marylanders who might not be able to afford these devices.

Additionally, the ability for statewide access to assistive technology lending libraries outlined in this legislation will allow individuals with disabilities and their supporters to learn about, try, and borrow assistive technology devices through short-term loans, enabling those with disabilities to live, work, learn, and play more independently.

Finally, the special, nonlapsing fund administered through the creation of the Maryland Assistive Technology Program in SB 208 will provide an ongoing source of revenue to continue to fund this vital program once established.

For these reasons, MWE **supports SB 208** and **asks the committee for a favorable report**.

If we can provide any additional information, please contact Jocelyn I. Collins at jcollins@policypartners.net.

SB208_NFB_FAV

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FAV

Establishing: Maryland Assistive Technology Program

Date: January 29, 2025

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

15 Charles Plaza, #3002

President@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Finance Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland support and definitely urge you to vote in favor of SB0208. Access to assistive technology improves the quality of life for persons with disabilities. Assistive technology improves access to computers, tablets and telephones as well as information from hundreds of sources.

The Department of Disabilities has proven itself to be capable of administering this type of program because it has a long track record of administering the Federal Assistive Technology Grant. The federal grant does not provide this needed technology to all of the citizens of Maryland who could benefit from it. It is time to recognize the Department of Disabilities' capability by establishing this program. It will benefit many seniors who do not qualify for vocational rehabilitation. Children will also benefit from this program because many school districts do not have the money to purchase the needed technology.

This bill also calls for the establishment of the Assistive Technology Fund. This fund is vital because assistive technology is very expensive. For instance, a braille display, which enables people to read what is on the computer screen or on their phone screen, costs \$20,000 or more. Establishing a technology fund will allow donations to be made as well as loans to be granted.

Please vote in favor of SB0208. Make the assistive technology promise a reality.

For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or 443-426-4110.

Letter in Support of SB0208 - 01.27.2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Susan Larsen

Position: FAV

Susan Larsen
Susan Larsen Marketing, LLC
68 N. Prospect Ave.
Catonsville, MD 21228
www.susanlarsenmarketing.com

January 27, 2025

Maryland Senate Finance Committee
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for Senate Bill SB0208 – Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

As the owner of Susan Larsen Marketing, LLC, and a proud advocate for accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill SB0208, which seeks to codify the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDTAP) within state statute. This critical step will ensure that Maryland continues to lead the way in supporting its residents with disabilities and fostering economic and technological innovation.

MDTAP has long been a lifeline for Marylanders with disabilities, enabling them to access the assistive technologies they need to live, work, and thrive in their communities. Codifying this program not only solidifies its essential role in our state but also allows for an expansion of services to address critical needs, including assistive technology assessments, customized training, and digital accessibility evaluations. These services will fill a growing gap in Maryland, particularly as the state's population continues to age and the demand for assistive technology rises.

With an aging population, programs like MDTAP are not just beneficial—they are essential. As more Marylanders seek to maintain their independence at home and in the workforce, access to cutting-edge assistive technologies will allow them to remain productive, connected, and engaged in their communities. The availability of advanced tools and personalized support can significantly reduce the barriers that individuals with disabilities face, promoting equity and inclusion in every aspect of daily life.

Moreover, the MDTAP program supports Maryland's economic growth by ensuring a more inclusive workforce. By providing resources and training, the program empowers individuals with disabilities to contribute fully to the economy, fostering entrepreneurship,

job retention, and career advancement. Businesses and organizations also benefit from digital accessibility assessments, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations while broadening their customer base and improving their workplace culture.

Senate Bill SB0208 will also ensure that Marylanders have access to the latest, most innovative assistive technologies available. By investing in MDTAP, Maryland strengthens its reputation as a hub for technological innovation and accessibility. This program will position Maryland as a leader in the integration of technology and disability services, attracting talent, businesses, and partnerships that share our commitment to inclusivity and forward-thinking solutions.

I urge you to support SB0208 and ensure that the Maryland Assistive Technology Program is fully equipped to continue serving as a vital resource for our residents. Together, we can ensure that all Marylanders—regardless of ability—can live full, independent lives while contributing to our state's success.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing commitment to supporting Marylanders with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Susan Larsen

Owner, Susan Larsen Marketing, LLC

Email: susan@susanlarsenmarketing.com

Phone: 443-840-6922

SB 208 MD Assistive Tech Program.FAV.AARP.pdf

Uploaded by: Tammy Bresnahan

Position: FAV



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**Testimony in Support of
SB 208 Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment
Senate Finance Committee
January 29, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Beidle and Members of the Senate Finance Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan; I am the Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. On behalf of AARP Maryland's 850,000 members, we thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **Senate Bill 208 Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment**. This legislation establishes the Maryland Assistive Technology Program within the Department of Disabilities to provide essential assistive technology devices and services to individuals with disabilities. AARP Maryland strongly supports SB 208 because it recognizes the critical need for access to assistive technology that empowers older Marylanders to maintain their independence and quality of life.

Assistive technology is a lifeline for many older adults and individuals with disabilities, enabling them to perform daily tasks, stay connected with their communities, and age in place. Devices such as hearing aids, screen readers, mobility aids, and adaptive equipment bridge the gap between limitations and the ability to live fully. For older Marylanders, these tools not only support their well-being but also reduce reliance on caregivers and long-term care facilities, alleviating strain on families and public resources.

SB 208's establishment of the Assistive Technology Services Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund is especially important. By ensuring the sustainability of this program, Maryland is taking a proactive step toward guaranteeing access to assistive technology for all who need it, regardless of financial barriers. Furthermore, requiring interest earnings to be credited to the Fund demonstrates a thoughtful approach to long-term financial stability.

AARP Maryland applauds the bill's holistic approach, which encompasses not only the distribution of devices but also the provision of related services. Proper training and support are essential for individuals to fully benefit from assistive technology, ensuring that these tools are used effectively and efficiently.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB 208. By passing this legislation, Maryland will lead by example, demonstrating its commitment to equity, inclusion, and the dignity of all residents, including our older adults.

Thank you for your consideration, we respectfully ask the Committee for favorable report. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

