

Establishing: Maryland Assistive Technology Program

Date: January 29, 2025

From: National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

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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.