

To: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Subject: Support for SB 667 with an amendment
Date: February 26, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Elizabeth Park and I am a blind graduate of Bryn Mawr College. I am writing to advocate the use of concrete language in the bill regarding the accessibility of digital textbooks. Several courses, necessary for my Bachelor of Arts degree, required students to use Vital Source (an affordable alternative to paper textbooks). Without accessible digital materials my degree in International Relations would have been impossible. I was fortunate enough to attend a school that ensured the accessibility of all educational materials. However, that is not the case for many blind students. Especially, when educational institutions assume that digital materials come with built-in accessibility features. We are in the 21st century after all. Students with print disabilities need to access educational materials without worrying about whether or not the information will be accessible.

The use of equivocal language allows companies to forget about accessibility. In contrast, firm language will hold companies accountable for various accessibility features. I urge the committee to improve the wording in this bill so that accessibility is a requirement for all digital textbooks. Digital avenues were created to make learning more accessible for all students: providing less weight to carry, lower cost, and the ability to read anywhere. I believe that blind and print disabled students should be included in the quest for access.

Precarious language will only hinder disabled students as they fight for equal access to materials while simultaneously trying to learn said material. Blind students should be given the opportunity to succeed in academics alongside their nondisabled peers. As digital materials become more prevalent on campus and online, the only way to achieve this goal is to clearly state the need for accessibility in the bill. Thank you for reading this letter.

Sincerely,

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