



**SB921 COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION - ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS - DIGITAL TOOLS
(NONVISUAL ACCESS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT FOR GRADES K-12 EDUCATION)**

March 9, 2021

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB921 County Boards of Education - Accessibility Standards - Digital Tools (Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for Grades K-12 Education)**. This bill requires digital tools developed or purchased by a county board of education to include specifications for access by students with disabilities, including nonvisual access. It requires a county board to provide a student with disabilities access to digital tools that enable students with disabilities to acquire the same information and access the same services as students without disabilities. The bill requires each invitation for bids or request for proposals for a digital tool to require submission of an accessibility conformance report.

AACPS believes that all students are entitled to challenging instruction from highly qualified professionals that addresses their unique learning needs and differences. AACPS also believes that all students should be afforded the opportunity to participate in challenging educational experiences that expand outcomes after graduation. Accordingly, AACPS clearly makes every effort to support the academic needs of each student. Students needs are addressed through various methods, including instructional materials, technology, and other necessary supports. In the case of a student receiving special education services, such accommodations are addressed in a student's individualized education program (IEP), and the accommodations are uniquely tailored to the individual student. Determinations are made via comprehensive student assessments. However, this legislation is overly broad in mandating that all digital tools developed or purchased by a local school system meet the requirements established in the bill. This is quite different than the current more refined and unique approach which is tailored to a specific student's instructional needs.

In accordance with State and federal laws and regulations, the needs of a student receiving special education services is multi-faceted one based on performance and other data maintained by the school system. Based on the relevant data and information, the IEP team, of which the parent/guardian is a member, determines how best to meet the student's educational needs.

It is also important to note that AACPS has a comprehensive approval process regarding materials of instruction, which includes digital tools. The school system currently provides digital tools for students who receive special education instruction if it is determined that a student requires such an accommodation. Again, this determination is made via the IEP process.

In addition, this bill creates and unfunded mandate which AACPS opposes. To the extent that AACPS is required to spend additional resources comply with the requirement set forth in the legislate, funding to implement this bill would detract resources that could otherwise be directed toward the strategic plan and educational equity. While difficult to quantify at this time, this legislation would have a significant fiscal impact on AACPS.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB921.