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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Finance Resources Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Support

HB1181-County Boards of Education – Accessibility Standards- Digital Tools

(Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for Grades K-12 Education)

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of HB1181 – The Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for Education. Virtual learning exposed many holes in our educational system, particularly when it comes to the provision of appropriate accessibility for students with disabilities. Blind students have been particularly impacted by lack of assistive technologies and equitable access to educational programming this year despite the clear requirements in Federal Law to provide them. Many students have been unable to participate in specific classes or activities because the technologies purchased by their jurisdictions do not interface with nonvisual accessibility platforms. For example, in Howard County, blind students are unable to participate in high school math classes because the program GEOGEBRA is not accessible to them and other students had trouble participating in classes on KAHOOT, which requires an understanding of color. A Mom in Frederick, who is herself blind, cannot get curriculum to load onto her screen reader and is thus unable to help her children with their work during virtual school.

HB1181 puts disability accountability measures in place during the local procurement process for digital technologies and content by requiring vendors to submit an Accessibility Conformance Report demonstrating how their technology complies with accessibility standards. In addition, a representative who specializes in providing vision services must be a part of the evaluation team for bids and counties must purchase only accessible digital tools as defined by the Federal Law. The bill puts fines into place for vendors who misrepresent or do not repair inaccessible platforms and requires local jurisdictions to provide accessibility information on their websites for public transparency.

Thank you for your favorable report on HB1181.

Sincerely,

Delegate Michele Guyton