

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 617
Local School Systems - Equivalent Access Standards - Digital Tools
(Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for K-12 Education)**

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

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1:00 pm

**Lauren Lamb
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 617, legislation requiring that a local school system to provide equivalent access to digital tools for students with disabilities, including the development, purchase, and provision of certain digital tools, and requiring a local school system to establish a process to evaluate a digital tool under consideration for purchase for nonvisual access by an employee of the school system.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students for the careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA members have long been tenacious advocates for policies and programs that will ensure our students are provided access to the resources and supports they need to achieve their full potential. This is particularly true of our most vulnerable students, including those with special needs. We take seriously our obligation to provide our students with special needs the fair and appropriate public education guaranteed to them in both federal and state law. By ensuring that the needs of our students with visual and physical limitations are considered when procuring digital devices to assist them in their learning, we are doing what is required to meet our



responsibilities to them, responsibilities they undeniably deserve. **We urge a favorable report on SB 617.**