

CRAIG J. ZUCKER  
Legislative District 14  
Montgomery County

Budget and Taxation Committee  
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 122  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3625 · 301-858-3625  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3625  
Fax 410-841-3618 · 301-858-3618  
Craig.Zucker@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker**  
**Senate Bill 617 - Local School Systems - Equivalent Access Standards - Digital Tools**  
**(Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for K-12 Education)**  
**Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee**  
**February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022**  
**1:00pm**  
**Position: SUPPORT**

Good afternoon Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chairman Kagan, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my pleasure to testify today in **support of Senate Bill 617 - Local School Systems - Equivalent Access Standards - Digital Tools (Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for K-12 Education)**.

Fundamentally, this legislation is designed to ensure equivalent access to educational resources that are procured by local school districts for students with disabilities, including blindness. Too often, companies that provide educational technology inaccurately describe the capabilities of the program or tool they are selling.

Although school districts do their best to procure and create materials that are accessible to all students, there is currently limited recourse available if they inadvertently purchase a product with limited capabilities. Senate Bill 617 creates a civil liability for a vendor that does not meet legally mandated equivalent access standards and refuses to fix the product in a timely manner.

The legislative text has been updated from its original introduction in the 2021 Legislative Session to reflect a longer lead time for implementation, adjust the State agencies involved to ensure expertise, and indemnify State and local boards of education should a tool not meet equivalent access standards.

Senate Bill 617 is the culmination of months of work on the bill text with advocates, school systems, the Maryland State Department of Education, and stakeholders. Further and minor clarifying amendments may be necessary, but I am confident that its implementation will benefit all kids in Maryland public schools. This is a very important step to ensure all students have equal access to education.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 617. Thank you for your kind consideration.