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OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

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Subject: Favorable SB824 with Amendments
To: Senate Finance Committee
From: Members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
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Date: March 10, 2022

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland support the general concept in SB824, Health – Accessibility of Electronic Advance Care Planning Documents. However, the bill needs to be amended if its goal is to really be achieved.

Amendment: all documents and websites associated with the Electronic Advanced Care Health Documents Program shall comply with the standards in section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to provide an individual with disabilities with nonvisual access in a way that is fully and equally accessible to and independently usable by the individual with disabilities so that the individual is able to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as users without disabilities, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

The purpose of this bill is to make healthcare documents accessible, not only to the patient, but also to the various entities who will be administering healthcare to the patient. Section 508 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act incorporates the standards used by the Worldwide Web Consortium in its accessibility guidelines (WCAG). Using these guidelines will ensure that everyone, including seniors and people with disabilities, will be able to read the content on the healthcare document websites established by this bill. Entities will also benefit from this requirement because there will be fewer questions about the wishes of the patient.

Developers are very familiar with WCAG because it has been in existence since 1995; therefore, it is not a burden to them. By doing things right in the beginning, developers will save both time and money.

Healthcare planning documents are very important, and access to them is vital. The best way to achieve this access is through electronic storage. Electronic storage in today's society is practical and common. The amendment suggested by the sponsor and the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland will improve the readability of these documents. Please vote in favor of the amended SB824.