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Testimony on HB 320: Data on Students with Disabilities
Ways and Means Committee
February 8, 2023
Position: Support

Chair and Members of the Committee.

I am providing this testimony today on behalf of Kalman Hettleman and myself. Mr. Hettleman was a member of the Kirwan Commission appointed by then-Speaker Busch, and has been a policy analyst, advocate and writer on special education issues. He has represented pro bono over 250 low-income students with disabilities in IEP meetings, and has written numerous articles and one book on special education. I am the co-chair of the Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition and outreach coordinator at the Trace R&D Center at the University of Maryland that focuses on inclusive information and communication technology.

Fortunately, there is at long last recognition in Maryland that the needs of students with disabilities have been severely neglected in policy, practice and funding. The sponsor of HB 320, Del. Guyton, has been in the forefront of efforts to bring about reform.

And HB 320 commendably addresses one particular aspect: the absence of sufficient disaggregated data on students with disabilities in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System. Inclusion of student disability data by specific disability category is a start. The absence of such data impedes reform.

Passage of HB 320 would at the same time help to focus the spotlight on the overall lack of adequate data on, for example, student performance and the costs of services. This lack of data, hopefully, will be part of the scope of the Special Education Workgroup that the Blueprint Accountability and Implementation Board has directed MSDE to create to study all aspects of special education.

HB 320 could help to support that study. The sooner it is enacted and implemented, the better.

Your support of HB 320 is urgently requested.

Respectfully submitted, Buzzy Hettleman and Liz Zogby