

**2024 HB1237 Testimony For 2024-03-27.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alan Lang

Position: FAV

Honorable Senators

Please vote for HB1237.

This bill passed the House without any unfavorable testimony.

As a parent of a teacher, I support any initiative that would alleviate the paperwork for special educators. The increasing burdens of this administrative work is one of the top reasons cited by special teachers for moving to general education classrooms or leaving the profession altogether.

Please vote for HB1237.

Alan Lang, District 31  
242 Armstrong Lane  
Pasadena, MD 21122  
410.336.9745  
[Alanlang1@verizon.net](mailto:Alanlang1@verizon.net)

### **3.26.24 MSEA Testimony House Bill 1237\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christian Gobel

Position: FAV

**FAVORABLE**  
**House Bill 1237**  
**State Department of Education – Task Force to Study the Maryland Online**  
**Special Education System**

**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**March 27, 2024**

**Christian Gobel**  
**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports House Bill 1237. As amended, House Bill 1237 establishes a task force to study the Maryland Online Special Education System. Under the bill, the task force is charged with: i) studying the effectiveness, functionality, and usability of the Maryland Online Individualized Family Service Plan and the Maryland Online Individualized Education Plan; ii) determining the availability of other platforms and how other platforms compare to the current system; iii) evaluating the costs of maintaining or upgrading the current system, or alternatively, acquiring a different platform; and iv) making recommendations to maintain and upgrade the system or replace the system with another platform as determined by the task force. The task force would be composed of key stakeholders including educators, parents who have students with IEPs, advocates, and representatives from the Maryland State Department of Education. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on or before June 1, 2025.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. 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 appreciates the sponsor for introducing House Bill 1237. Improving working conditions for special education teachers is critical to attract more individuals to enter the profession and retain existing special education teachers. In the 2022-2023 school



year, the Maryland State Department of Education reported approximately 2,572 educator vacancies statewide.<sup>1</sup> The certification area with the highest vacancy rate was special education, with approximately 581 vacancies.<sup>2</sup> The reported vacancy data corroborates what MSEA's local unions hear from our special education members across the state. Special educators are leaving the profession in droves, either to teach in general education or to leave education entirely, because of special educators' high caseloads and current working conditions.

Special education obligates educators to prepare a significant amount of paperwork to demonstrate compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. A well-performing online platform system is crucial to ensure educators can serve their students well and efficiently satisfy their compliance and data keeping requirements under the IDEA.

However, for many years educators in Maryland have expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with the current Maryland Online IEP system due to its poor functionality. Special educators spend hours upon hours preparing their students' IEPs in the Maryland Online IEP system and should not be burdened with a poor performing platform to carry out their essential duties. A task force dedicated to upgrading the current online system or evaluating the possibility of an alternative system has meaningful potential to improve the educational experience for students with disabilities and their families, while also raising the working conditions for special education teachers across the state.

**We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on House Bill 1237.**

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland General Assembly Ways & Means Committee Briefing – MSDE Updates on the Maryland Educator Workforce* (pg. 144 of 214 of the pdf file) (Sept. 12, 2023), [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting\\_material/2023/w&m%20-%20133389929402352101%20-%20Ways%20and%20Means%209-12-23%20Briefings%20-%20Presentations%20-%20Revised.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/meeting_material/2023/w&m%20-%20133389929402352101%20-%20Ways%20and%20Means%209-12-23%20Briefings%20-%20Presentations%20-%20Revised.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

# **HB 1237.Special Education Online IEP System Task F**

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: FAV

**BILL:** House Bill 1237  
**TITLE:** State Department of Education - Task Force to Study the Maryland Online Special Education System  
**DATE:** March 27, 2024  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT  
**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and the Environment  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1237 in order to form a task force to study the Maryland special education system, focusing on the online system for individualized educational programs (IEPs) and other special education related plans. MABE is well-aware of significant shortcomings with the current online IEP system, and agrees that a task force should be convened to study and recommend improvements to this critically important tool. The task force established by this bill will advance much needed improvements in efficiency and accuracy, and therefore usefulness, of the educational plans that educators, parents, and ultimately students rely on for special education services in accordance with these plans.

MABE, on behalf of all local boards of education, assures the General Assembly that Maryland's professional educators and school administrators are working within a very comprehensive federal and state legal and educational framework to provide students with special education services and accommodations. Local boards of education place a very high priority on ensuring that students receive high quality special education programs and instruction to meet the unique needs of every disabled student. Maryland's school systems are mandated to provide a wide array of special education services in accordance and compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and corresponding federal and state regulations. IDEA requires that all eligible disabled students receive special education and related services if they are between the ages of 3 and 21, meet the definition of one or more of the categories of disabilities specified in IDEA, and are in need of special education and related services as a result of the disability.

Federal special education law is intended to guarantee the rights of students and parents to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The United States Supreme Court, in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, 137 S. Ct. 988 (2017), held that the provision of FAPE must be tailored to the unique needs of a particular student and that the school system must offer an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is reasonably calculated to enable a student to make progress appropriate in light of the student's circumstances. In addition, the court ruled that a student's education program must be "appropriately ambitious" in light of the student's unique circumstances.

Given the complexity and individualized nature of IEPs the value of having a well-designed online IEP system can hardly be overstated. First, parents deserve a clearly communicated document regarding their student's learning, services, and progress. MSDE describes the IEP as "a written document and process outlining the who, what, when, why, where and how of instruction and related services that are to be provided to a student with disabilities." Second, special education is a field that is continuously identified as deserving relief from paperwork requirements. MABE believes that the task force on the State's online special education system will lead to statewide improvements in special education recordkeeping and communications and thereby assist parents and the many staff contributing to each student's IEP and other special education plans and services.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1237.

**HB 1237 - xover - State Department of Education -**

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FWA





**PSSAM**  
Public School Superintendents' Association  
OF MARYLAND

**Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director**  
1217 S. Potomac Street  
Baltimore, MD 21224  
410-935-7281  
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

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**BILL:** HB 1237

**TITLE:** State Department of Education - Task Force to Study the Maryland Online Special Education System

**DATE:** March 27, 2024

**POSITION:** Favorable with Amendments

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**CONTACT:** Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports HB 1237 with amendments.**

This bill establishes the Task Force to Study the Maryland Online Special Education System and provides for membership of the task force. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must staff the task force, which must study the system that includes both the Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP; IEP) and the Maryland Online Individualized Family Service Plan (MOIFSP; IFSP). The task force must (1) study the effectiveness, functionality, and usability of the Maryland Online Special Education System; (2) determine the availability of other platforms and how other platforms compare to the current system in terms of effectiveness, functionality, usability, and cost; (3) evaluate the costs of maintaining or upgrading the current system or purchasing or leasing another platform; and (4) make recommendations to maintain and upgrade the system or replace the system with another platform as determined by the task force.

PSSAM supports any initiatives to alleviate the paperwork for special educators. The increasing burdens of this administrative work is one of the top reasons cited by special teachers for moving to general education classrooms or leaving the profession altogether.

According to MSDE, the State Superintendent is committed to addressing the concerns in this bill via an existing IEP User/Workgroup that meets quarterly to obtain stakeholder feedback on the Maryland Online IEP System and the IEP document form and format. Many of the current participants are the same stakeholders that are identified in this bill, and more.

PSSAM is aware of this group and this Superintendent's commitment to moving the work forward. Therefore, we ask that the Committee amend the bill to remove the creation of a new Task Force but retain the report required by the Department.

For these reasons, PSSAM requests a **favorable with amendments** report for HB 1237.

# **HB 1237 MSHA Fav with Amendment.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Peters

Position: FWA



February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

**Bill: HB 1237 - State Department of Education - Task Force to Study the Maryland Online IEP System**

**Position: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members:

The Maryland Speech Language Hearing Association (MSHA) represents speech language pathologists and audiologists across Maryland. We elevate and engage members to strive for excellence in serving those impacted by communication and related disorders through advocacy, equity, education, interprofessional collaboration, and leadership development. Our membership works in private practice and in our Maryland's public schools. HB 1237, as written, does not include speech language pathologists who access the system daily. We ask that speech language pathologists be given equal opportunity to shape any future direction or changes to MDOIEP and suggest the following language with proposed additions underlined and deletions in red:

(c) The Task Force consists of: (3) the following members, appointed by the State Superintendent of Schools:

- (i) three general education public school teachers, representing an urban, a suburban, and a rural local school system;
- (ii) three special education public school teachers, representing a large, medium, and small local school system;
- (iii) three public school speech-language pathologists, representing a large, medium, and small local school system
- ~~(iii)~~ iv) one representative of the Maryland State Educators Association;
- ~~(iv)~~ v) one representative of a special education advocacy organization; and
- ~~(v)~~ vi) two parents of students enrolled in a public school that have an individualized education program

Speech language pathologists use Maryland Online IEP more frequently than any other staff member in the school system. We have large caseloads and in many districts in Maryland use

Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
140B Purcellville Gateway Drive, Suite 120  
Purcellville, VA 20132  
301-304-7001  
[info@mdslha.org](mailto:info@mdslha.org)  
[www.mdslha.org](http://www.mdslha.org)

the system to enter our daily notes. The effectiveness, functionality, and usability of the system has a major impact on our practice in public schools. It is a frustrating system and speech-language pathologists are uniquely positioned to provide meaningful recommendations for maintaining, upgrading, or replacing the system. Without the input from the most frequent users of the system, all recommendations from the proposed Task Force would provide an incomplete picture of changes needed for the primary electronic medical/education record system used in Maryland public schools. Thank you for taking up this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Megan Miskowski".

Megan Miskowski  
Director of Advocacy and Public Policy  
Maryland Speech Language Hearing Association

Maryland Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
140B Purcellville Gateway Drive, Suite 120  
Purcellville, VA 20132  
301-304-7001  
[info@mdslha.org](mailto:info@mdslha.org)  
[www.mdslha.org](http://www.mdslha.org)

**HB 1237 MSDE Letter of Information.pdf**

Uploaded by: Dr. Carey Wright

Position: INFO



The Department would also like to highlight the impact of the proposed amendments for further consideration. The amendments to HB 1237 incorporate the inclusion of the Online Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) System into the mandate of the Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) Task Force. The Online IFSP System is an electronic database where IFSPs can be written in a format that ensures state and federal compliance. However, it is imperative to recognize that the Online IFSP System operates independently from the MOIEP, catering to distinct user demographics. Notably, the professional demographics utilizing these systems differ due to the distinction between special education and early intervention staff across jurisdictions. Moreover, among Maryland's twenty-four jurisdictions, four early intervention programs are not under the auspices of the school system (Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Frederick County, and Montgomery County), further emphasizing the divergence in administrative structures.

Similar to the MOIEP, the Department convenes a quarterly IFSP User Group to obtain stakeholder feedback on the Online IFSP System. Regular Online IFSP stakeholders participating in the group include representatives from the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) at MSDE, Local Infants and Toddlers Program (LITP) leaders, service providers, data managers/data entry staff, public agency staff (e.g., Maryland School for the Blind and Maryland School for the Deaf), and State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) members. Attendance by other stakeholders is encouraged. Meetings are held virtually to ensure vast geographic representation. Also, like the MOIEP, Online IFSP users can provide suggestions for Online IFSP revisions directly to MSDE staff.

Considering the proposed composition of the Task Force for the MOIEP in HB 1237, it is probable that many members of the MOIEP Task Force will lack familiarity with the Online IFSP System, given their expertise lies within the MOIEP framework. For these reasons, a workgroup to study and make recommendations about the Online IFSP system could only be conducted separately from a workgroup to study MOIEP. This would necessitate additional funding, staffing, and community outreach to ensure a diverse coalition of early childhood stakeholders is represented in the workgroup. This funding must include a third party to support, organize, convene, and facilitate the separate workgroups (MOIEP and Maryland IFSP). The Department estimates the overall cost of this consultant would be between \$75,000 - \$100,000.

As an agency, MSDE is committed to continuously improving the MOIEP and the Online IFSP for all stakeholders. Currently, MSDE is facilitating the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup (SEW). The SEW is a coalition of practitioners, legislators, state agency representatives, advocates, and parents brought together to discuss and make recommendations on instruction and services for students with disabilities; the topic of special education data systems has been raised by workgroup members as an area for further investigation. Rather than awaiting specific legislation, the SEW will provide concrete recommendations, and develop a cohesive plan for improving the MOIEP and Online IFSP systems that would braid naturally into the work that this landmark group is engaged in.

In closing, MSDE wants to address a letter that Delegate Miller brought to the Department's attention on February 21<sup>st</sup>. The letter outlines concrete MOIEP suggestions from the Frederick County Board of Education. While some of these suggestions have already been implemented into MOIEP based on feedback from other users, MSDE provided an overview of the concerns to the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup on February 28, 2024. On March 20, 2024, the SEW made a formal recommendation that "MSDE should review the MOIEP and Online IFSP, including data collection, reporting capabilities, user experience, and feedback mechanisms with special consideration for families facing language barriers. The concerns and recommendations are on the April 10<sup>th</sup> MOIEP User/Workgroup meeting for their consideration and to outline next steps.

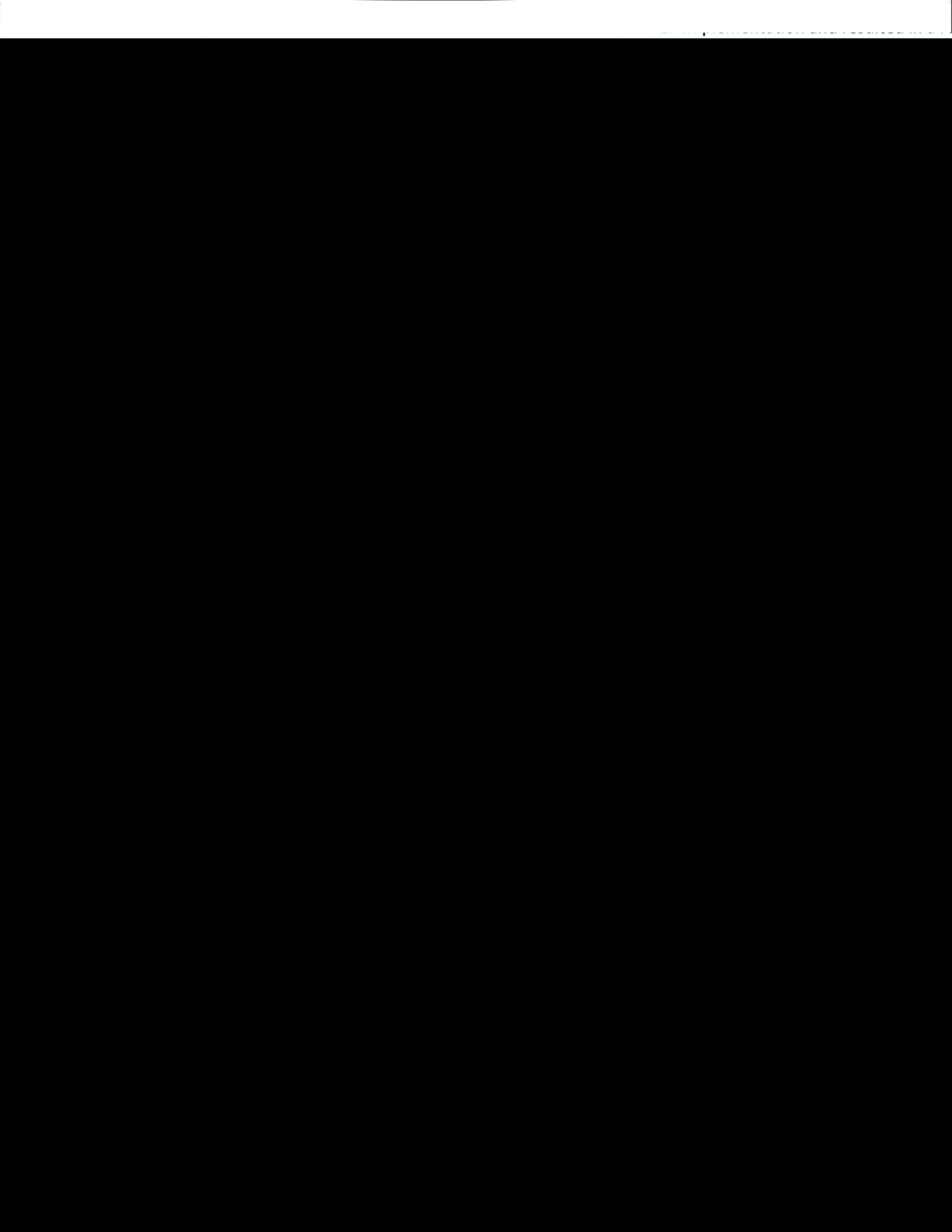
We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **HB1237**. For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne at 410-767-0504, or [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov).



# **EACtestimony.HB1237.Senate.pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: INFO



EAC Letter of Information for HB1237, page two

*MSDE should review the Maryland Online IEP (MOIEP) and Maryland Online Individualized Family Service Plan, including data collection, reporting capabilities, user experience, and current mechanisms for feedback and revision, with particular attention to families who do not speak English as their native language, and report on suggested improvements and/or alternatives within six months.*

MSDE has committed to implementing the recommendations of the Workgroup; therefore, we expect a report on improvements and alternatives to MOIEP and MOIFSP by September 2024, nine months prior to the task force report that would result from this bill.

The EAC strongly recommends that you consider this information as you deliberate HB1237. To discuss or if you have questions, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Co-Chairperson of the EAC, at [lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org) or 410-370-5730 or Liz Zogby, Co-Chairperson of the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup, at [katzogby@gmail.com](mailto:katzogby@gmail.com) or 443-691-1755.

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Almazan, Selene Almazan Law, LLC

Rene Averitt-Sanzone, The Parents' Place of Maryland

Linda Barton, MSED, Education Advocate

Beth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland, Co-Chairperson

Melanie Carlos, xMinds (Partnership for Extraordinary Minds)

Stephanie Carr, S.L. Carr Education Associates, LLC

Rich Ceruolo, Parent

Michelle Davis, M.Ed., ABCs for Life Success

Jennifer Engel Fisher, M.S., Weinfeld Education Group

Lisa Frank, Andrea Bennett, Jen Ritchotte, and Amy Tonti, Special Kids Company

Kimberly Glassman and Brian K. Gruber, Law Office of Brian K. Gruber

Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course, LLC

Rosemary Kitzinger and Marjorie Guldán, Bright Futures, LLC

Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland

Mallory Legg, Tyler Cochran, and Maureen van Stone, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland, Co-Chairperson

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Mark B. Martin, Law Offices of Mark B. Martin, P.A.

Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Advocacy Center

Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism

Jaime E. Seaton, BGS Law, LLC

Ronnetta Stanley, M.Ed., Loud Voices Together

Wayne Steedman, Steedman Law Group, LLC

Winifred Winston and Karleen Spitulnik, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland

Liz Zogby, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition

**MGA24-HB1237-EEE-LOI- Zogby.pdf**

Uploaded by: Liz Zogby

Position: INFO

**Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee**  
**HB 1237: State Department of Education - Task Force to Study the**  
**Maryland Online Special Education System**  
**March 23, 2024**  
**Letter of Information**

I am providing this letter of information regarding House Bill 1237, which would establish a task force to study the effectiveness, functionality, and usability of the Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) and the Maryland Online Individualized Family Service Plan (MOIFSP), and to make recommendations including on possible alternatives to these systems by June 2025.

I am currently serving as the co-chair of the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup convened by the Maryland State Department of Education as mandated by the Blueprint Accountability & Implementation Board's Comprehensive Implementation Plan. Our 48-member Workgroup includes a diverse group of stakeholders, including Local Education Agency administrators, principals, general and special education teachers, related service providers, parents, advocates, and other experts. The Workgroup is charged with making "recommendations on improving the education of students receiving special education services in P-12 schools in the State."

Our February 28, 2024, session was focused on Effective IEP Implementation and included discussions on data collection, monitoring, and technical assistance. The MOIEP and MOIFSP are integral parts of these processes, and our discussions and the Workgroup members' feedback reflected the need for attention to these critical systems. At our March 20, 2024, meeting, the Workgroup approved the following recommendation:

*MSDE should review the Maryland Online IEP (MOIEP) and Maryland Online Individualized Family Service Plan, including data collection, reporting capabilities, user experience, and current mechanisms for feedback and revision, with particular attention to families who do not speak English as their native language, and report on suggested improvements and/or alternatives within six months.*

The Workgroup has been a productive and collaborative effort between MSDE, advocates, and the diverse membership. MSDE has committed to implementing the Workgroup's recommendations; therefore, I expect a report on improvements and alternatives to MOIEP and MOIFSP by September 2024, nine months prior to the task force report that would result from this bill.

Please consider this information as you deliberate HB1237. I would be happy to provide any additional information that would be helpful.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Zogby  
Special Education Policy & Advocacy Project  
[katzogby@gmail.com](mailto:katzogby@gmail.com)  
443-691-1755