

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 1076: Education—Blind and Visually Impaired Students—Textbook Equity

DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2024

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 40 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, is pleased to support House Bill 1076, which would ensure that students who are blind or visually impaired would have timely access to the textbooks and supplementary instructional materials used by their sighted peers in class. The goal of House Bill 1076 is to ensure equity for students who are blind or visually impaired. Currently, students may not get their textbooks on time or ever because local school boards do not make decisions about which textbooks to use until it is too late to get the books transcribed into accessible media or because local school boards cannot or will not pay to have the textbook transcribed into accessible media.

The legislation would require that publishers send an electronic file of every pupil edition textbook sold in Maryland to the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) in NIMAS (National Instructional Materials Access Standard) form. NIMAC will store the files for use in production of the books. Additionally, the bill requires local boards of education to decide by January 15th of each year which textbooks they will use the following school year, and requires the Maryland State Department of Education to purchase any book that will be used if the Maryland Instructional Resource Center (MIRC) does not have the book or cannot locate it.

With these steps, Maryland can ensure that its students who are blind and visually impaired have the opportunity to participate in class with the same instructional materials and textbooks as their peers. For this reason, the EAC strongly supports House Bill 1076.

Please contact Leslie Seid Margolis at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505 with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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Additionally, the Maryland Education Coalition also signs on to this testimony.