



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Ways and Means Committee

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

February 28, 2024

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. The Council is led by a diverse group of people with developmental disabilities and family members of people with developmental disabilities. For that reason, we support HB 1237 with the following amendments:

- **ADD three more representatives to task force.** They include:
- A representative from an organization that serves the limited English-speaking disability community
- A representative from the Maryland Parent Training and Health Information Center
- A person with lived experience with a disability who can address the issue of accessibility.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Establishes a task force to study the Maryland Online IEP System.
- Requires the task force to study the effectiveness, functionality, and usability of the Maryland Online IEP System, determine the availability of other platforms, evaluate the cost of maintaining or upgrading the current system, and make recommendations to maintain or upgrade the current system or replace it with another platform.

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Students receive the services and supports they need and want to succeed.** State and federal law requires the provision of a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. These laws also afford many protections for students with disabilities, including the development and implementation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP sets goals, tracks progress, and should lead to positive outcomes and the student's success in school. IEPs are developed by a multidisciplinary team of educators and related service providers as well as parents and the student. Despite parents being full members of the IEP team, schools have access to more resources, information, and expertise, while many families struggle to understand and navigate the IEP process.
- **Clear IEPs that are accessible to all families helps families and teachers.** The online IEP is hard to understand and overwhelming. In addition, it is only available in English, creating even more barriers for families for whom English is not their native language.

In order for students to learn and succeed, all members of the IEP team, including families, need to be welcomed, valued, and understood. Making sure the Maryland Online IEP System is effective for everyone will help that happen, therefore, the Council supports HB 1237 with the amendments to make the task force more inclusive.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, RLondon@md-council.org