

**BILL:** House Bill 1076  
**TITLE:** Education - Blind and Visually Impaired Students - Textbook Equity  
**POSITION:** SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS  
**DATE:** February 21, 2024  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) supports House Bill 1076 to ensure accessibility for vision-impaired students to textbooks and other instructional materials. To be clear, MABE firmly believes that school systems are providing the access called for in this legislation. However, if the legislature believes that greater assurances are needed to guarantee the timely availability of accessible textbooks, then passage of this legislation could advance that cause.

The amendment MABE has identified as needed in the bill relate to the arbitrary and overly broad requirement that all textbooks be elected by January 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. Removing this provision would continue to drive the mission of the bill to have school systems, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Instructional Resources Center, collaborate to ensure the identification and production of accessible materials for all students. Specifically, MABE requests an amendment to strike lines 10 through 12 on page 4 of the bill.

MABE joins all local school systems in the commitment to each student, regardless of disability, having access to challenging instruction from highly qualified professionals that addresses their unique learning needs and differences. Clearly, access to materials that have been converted to formats including Braille and large print makes sense as integral to the learning potential of students with vision challenges.

For this reason, MABE supports the passage of this legislation, with the amendment described above.