

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



BILL: HB 1076
TITLE: Education - Blind and Visually Impaired Students - Textbook Equity
DATE: February 21, 2024
POSITION: Favorable with amendments
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** House Bill 1076 **with amendments**.

This bill requires, by January 1, 2025, publishers that sell textbooks in the State to provide an electronic file of the textbook in a specified standard to the National Instructional Materials Access Center. It further requires local boards of education to, by January 15 of each year, determine the instructional materials that will be used in the upcoming school year. A local board must coordinate with the Instructional Resources Center (IRC) to provide the instructional materials in a specialized format to students who are blind or visually impaired, no later than the first day of classes of the upcoming school year. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide support to the IRC to ensure that textbooks and supplemental materials in a specialized format are available to blind and visually impaired students statewide. If the instructional materials are not available in a specialized format at the IRC and cannot otherwise be obtained, MSDE must cover the cost to produce the instructional materials in braille or large print.

PSSAM supports the purpose and intent of House Bill 1076 to ensure accessibility for vision-impaired students to textbooks and other instructional materials. PSSAM believes that each student should have high quality and accessible instructional materials, and all Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans that account for specialized materials should be met with expediency and accuracy.

However, PSSAM requests an amendment to remove January 15th as the annual date by which all instructional materials will be determined for the upcoming school year. This provision is overly broad and seemingly arbitrary. Also, as previously indicated, individual education plans and 504 plans determine the specific needs of each student and may occur at any time during the school or calendar year.

PSSAM supports a special education system that respects the dedication and professional expertise of special educators and school administrators to develop, in collaboration with parents, individual education programs (IEPs) to identify and determine the most appropriate services and learning materials for students. With the amendments described above, PSSAM welcomes the additional services HB 1076 would provide to our special education students and families.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** House Bill 1076 and requests a **favorable with amendments** report.