

BILL: HB1237 **DATE:** February 25, 2024

SUBJECT: State Department of Education -
Task Force to Study the
Maryland Online IEP System

POSITION: Information Only

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EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding concerns raised about the Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) system. First, we want to thank Delegate Miller for bringing Frederick County’s concerns about the online Individual Education Program (IEP) system to our attention. We want to provide some background information about Local Education Agency (LEA) options regarding the online IEP system, share our current system for processing user feedback, and share some alternatives where improvement of MOIEP can braid naturally into initiatives already being implemented by MSDE.

In the state of Maryland, all LEAs must ensure their IEPs meet both state and federal guidelines. The Maryland Online IEP system, developed in collaboration between MSDE and the Johns Hopkins Center for Technology in Education (JHU/CTE), is an electronic database where IEPs can be written in a format that ensures state and federal compliance. MOIEP is grant-funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B. Although most LEAs choose to use MOIEP, Maryland is a local control state and districts do have the autonomy to choose a different electronic IEP system, so long as IEPs produced from that system meet all requirements. Currently, four LEAs (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Howard, and Wicomico Counties) do not use MOIEP.

MSDE is committed to a cycle of continuous improvement for MOIEP. MSDE convenes a quarterly IEP User/Workgroup to obtain stakeholder feedback on the Maryland Online IEP System and the IEP document form and format. Regular stakeholders participating in the group include cross-divisional representation from the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) at MSDE, LEA leaders and service providers, public agency staff (e.g., Maryland School for the Blind, Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland Department of Rehabilitative Services, etc.), nonpublic special education school staff, and Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC) members. Attendance by other stakeholders is encouraged. Meetings are held virtually to ensure vast geographic representation. The next scheduled meeting is March 26, 2024.

In addition to the User/Workgroup process, IEP users can submit concerns and recommendations through the MOIEP Support Tracking System (MIST) in the MOIEP or provide suggestions for IEP or MOIEP revisions to MSDE staff. For example, in 2021 the Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC) provided a list of suggestions to MSDE and many of these recommendations have been implemented over the past two years. In addition to the scheduled workgroups and MIST

system, MSDE meets with other stakeholders and user groups as requested. Since November, MSDE has met twice with the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) to hear collective feedback on MOIEP. We have also met regularly with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) to hear feedback about the functionality of MOIEP as it relates to Secondary Transition Planning.

As an agency, we are committed to continuously improving MOIEP 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 MOIEP has been raised by workgroup members as an area for further investigation. Rather than waiting for a piece of legislation to pass, allowing the SEW the opportunity to provide concrete recommendations and plans for improving the MOIEP system would braid naturally into work that this landmark group is already doing. MSDE plans to discuss this topic with the SEW at the next meeting on February 28, 2024.

In closing, we also want to address a letter that Delegate Miller brought to our attention on February 21st. 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, we intend to bring all other suggestions directly to the March 26th MOIEP User/Workgroup meeting.

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