



HOUSE WAYS & MEANS Committee
House Bill 1237: State Department of Education – Task Force to Study the Maryland
Online IEP System
February 26, 2024
Position: Support w/amendments

The Parents' Place of MD (PPMD) is Maryland's Parent Training and Health Information Center for the state, and we have been serving families who have children and youth with disabilities and special healthcare for over 30 years. And almost every family we work with has a child who has Individualized Education Program or an IEP. And without fail almost every reason a family contacts us is because there are issues about their child's IEP.

PPMD's mission is to empower families as advocates and partners in improving education and health outcomes for children with disabilities and special healthcare needs with a commitment to diversity and equity. Our core belief is that families are the experts on their child it is just our job to help them become their child's best advocate.

The IEP document is challenging for families because:

- It is hard to understand and overwhelming - the language and acronyms are barriers, especially for families with low literacy and limited English proficiency and;
- The online version it is not in a families' native language – sadly our families, who speak another language, during their child's IEP meeting only have the document available in English. This also means that families are not getting their necessary documents as required by MD law prior to their child's IEP meeting in their native language and even more problematic they are not receiving their child's IEP translated sometimes 45 to 60 days after a meeting and sometimes longer.

IDEA and COMAR are explicitly clear that the family is to be an equal IEP team member which is nearly impossible when at its core the family struggles to understand the actual IEP document itself. The is why PPMD supports HB 1237 to form a task force to study the Maryland Online IEP System with the following additions to the membership of the task force to include:

- A representative who serves the Limited English-Speaking Disability Community;
- A representative from MD Parent Training and Health Information Center;
- A person with a disability who has the lived experience to address issues of accessibility.



At PPMD we do understand and respect that the contents of the IEP are legally required but the document could be modified to not only work better for families but teachers as well but this needs to be a well thought out process that considers multiple perspectives and the necessary legal requirement both to IDEA and COMAR.

True educational success is when all members of the team, especially families, feel heard and valued as partners in their child's education and the IEP document is one of the foundational pieces.

Respectfully submitted,

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Executive Director