



Empowering People to Lead Systemic Change

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DisabilityRightsMD.org

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY OF DISABILITY RIGHTS MARYLAND

HOUSE BILL 531 – EDUCATION - REMOTE LEARNING ACCOMMODATIONS - ESTABLISHED (COLLEGE DISABILITY EDUCATION ACT)

February 18, 2025

Position: Support

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. DRM helps people with disabilities pursue opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of community life, and champion their rights to self-determination, dignity, equality, opportunity, and freedom from discrimination and harm. For this reason, **DRM supports House Bill 531**, which would require public colleges to provide students with remote learning accommodations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, individuals with any disability are much less likely to be employed than their counterparts without disabilities.¹ The unemployment rate in 2023, defined as “those who did not have a job, were available for work, and were actively looking for a job in the 4 weeks preceding the survey” was twice as high for individuals with disabilities as those without, 7.2% compared to 3.5% respectively. One cause of this disparity is barriers to post-secondary education. While federal laws like the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) protect the rights of K-12 students with disabilities whose disability prevents them from in-person learning and entitles them to “home and hospital instruction,” there is no such equivalent in place at the college level. Even when college programs do offer online components, the offering alone is not an assurance that the program is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

HB 531 will ensure that remote learning accommodations remain routinely available at the post-secondary level and, importantly, will emphasize efforts to improve accessibility and outcomes for eligible students. For these reasons, DRM **supports HB 531**.

For more information or with questions, please contact Megan Jones at meganc@disabilityrightsmd.org.

¹ [Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics—2023, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.](#)