

GARY SIMMONS
Legislative District 12B
Anne Arundel County

Judiciary Committee
Subcommittees

Criminal Law and Procedure
Family and Juvenile Law



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 14th, 2025

RE: Testimony in Support of HB0531

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Testimony in strong support of HB0531, the College Disability Education Act. This critical legislation will ensure that Maryland's public institutions of higher education provide remote learning accommodations for students whose disabilities impede their ability to attend in-person classes. As an advocate for equitable access to education, I urge you to pass this bill to uphold the principles of inclusivity, fairness, and opportunity for all students, regardless of their physical or medical challenges.

For students with chronic illnesses, mobility impairments, and other disabilities, in-person attendance is often a significant barrier to their academic success. Many of these students face daily struggles, including transportation difficulties, exacerbation of medical conditions due to environmental factors, or the unpredictability of their health. By requiring institutions to establish remote learning options, HB0531 ensures that these students have a fair and reasonable opportunity to pursue higher education without unnecessary hardship.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that remote learning is not only possible but also an effective and viable solution for many students. Institutions swiftly adapted to online platforms, proving that virtual learning accommodations are not just a theoretical solution but a practical reality. Given this precedent, there is no justification for denying students with disabilities the same access to remote education that was made widely available during the pandemic.

Additionally, HB0531 provides mechanisms to support institutions in implementing these accommodations. The inclusion of a grant program will help institutions build the necessary infrastructure to support remote learning, ensuring that no school is left behind due to financial constraints. Furthermore, the bill includes provisions for waiver eligibility, acknowledging that some institutions may face unique challenges while still prioritizing student access and equity.

Denying remote learning accommodations effectively denies students with disabilities their right to equal educational opportunities. HB0531 is a necessary step toward a more inclusive and accessible higher education system in Maryland. I respectfully urge the committee to vote in favor of this bill and support students who rely on these essential accommodations to achieve their academic goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,


Delegate Gary Simmons