



Maryland Higher Education Commission

Appropriations

House Bill 912

**Institutions of Higher Education - Instructor Training - Accommodations for Students
With Disabilities**

March 5, 2025

1:00 PM

Favorable

Good afternoon Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 912. Thank you to Delegate Michele Guyton for sponsoring this critical legislation.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission is committed to expanding educational opportunities in Maryland by addressing educational access. House Bill 912 seeks to train staff in higher education on managing students with disabilities. This legislation is essential to fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. Staff must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to support students with diverse needs, as institutions strive to provide equal access to education. The proper training ensures compliance with legal requirements, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, while also promoting a culture of accessibility and understanding.

In addition to meeting concerns regarding legal compliance, well-trained staff can proactively identify barriers, implement appropriate accommodations, and create a welcoming atmosphere that empowers students to succeed and graduate. This training should cover topics such as disability awareness, effective communication strategies, the implementation of assistive technologies, and best practices for accommodating learning differences. Faculty and support staff who are knowledgeable about these issues can more effectively collaborate with students, disability services offices, and other campus resources to provide individualized support.

By prioritizing staff training, institutions can improve retention and graduation rates among students with disabilities, ultimately advancing their broader goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Investing in this training is not just a matter of compliance—it is a commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.

A well-resourced program should include disability services professionals, academic advisors trained in accessibility, assistive technology specialists, and mental health counselors who understand the unique challenges faced by students with disabilities. Currently, the need for increased staffing ensures that students receive timely support, personalized accommodations, and proactive guidance, rather than facing delays or inadequate services due to understaffing.

The requirement for the Maryland Higher Education Commission to create a model program for students with disabilities requires a strong infrastructure, which includes hiring additional staff dedicated to accessibility, accommodations, and institutional support. Furthermore, additional personnel can help develop and implement best practices and conduct staff and faculty training.

In closing, the Maryland Higher Education Commission urges a favorable report on House Bill 912.