

**House Appropriations Committee**  
**Senate Bill 208: Human Services - Maryland Assistive Technology Program**  
**- Establishment**  
**March 25, 2025**  
**Position: Support**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM), is Maryland's designated Protection & Advocacy agency, mandated to protect the civil rights of people with disabilities. DRM is pleased to submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 208, which aims to establish the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDATP) within the Maryland Department of Disabilities.

This bill seeks to codify the Maryland Assistive Technology Program (MDATP) in state law, enabling it to expand its services to include fee-based offerings such as assessments, customized training, and digital accessibility evaluations. These enhanced services will help to address critical gaps in the state's assistive technology (AT) resources while fostering the MDATP's long-term sustainability.

AT empowers people with disabilities to enhance their ability to manage daily living, work, education, communication, and recreation. Through the MDATP's statewide AT lending libraries, Marylanders can access and borrow equipment such as alternative and augmentative communication devices, reading machines, assistive listening devices, environmental controls, and adaptive games. This flexibility minimizes financial risks and supports informed decision-making by allowing individuals to try equipment before committing long term. Once they identify what works best, they can pursue funding through insurance, private funding, or possibly obtain the item through a re-use center free of charge.

Securing AT through public or private insurance can be an arduous process, often requiring individuals to navigate complex approval systems and pursue multiple appeals to obtain even basic equipment. The MDATP serves as a vital resource for those unable to access the AT they need through insurance, whether due to coverage denials or the need for specialized devices that fall outside the scope of medical coverage. Additionally, the MDATP provides critical support for uninsured individuals who would otherwise have no access to these essential tools. By strengthening the MDATP as a permanent program, this legislation will meaningfully increase Marylanders' access to critical AT devices and services.

At DRM, one of our primary goals is to improve access to AT for Marylanders with disabilities. Each year, we support numerous clients in obtaining the AT they need to enhance their independence and fully participate in their communities. Unfortunately, there remains a significant lack of affordable AT options for low- and

middle-income individuals with disabilities in Maryland. To bridge this gap, DRM frequently refers clients to the MDATP for essential services such as access to the re-use program, AT counseling, and borrowing equipment to find the right fit. It is crucial to nurture and expand programs like the MDATP to ensure that Marylanders with disabilities are not left behind in accessing these critical resources.

Notably, this bill establishes the Assistive Technology Services Fund to sustainably finance essential services such as training, digital accessibility evaluations, and remediation. As vital aspects of daily life—such as government programs, employment, and education—continue to shift online, it is imperative that all Marylanders, including those with disabilities, can interact in and use these digital spaces.

DRM is also proud to support this bill as the MDATP is designed to make sure that all Marylanders—regardless of background or resources—have access to assistive technology. By investing in AT, Maryland will empower individuals with disabilities to live more independently and engage more fully in their communities.

DRM strongly supports Senate Bill 208 and respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on this key bill. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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