

**Chair Atterbeary and Vice Chair Wilkins -**

**Testimony in SUPPORT of**

**HB 694, SB 0851**

Believe it or not, 34 Years Later!, Howard County Schools are not yet fully compliant with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Currently there are issues with Elevators, Accessible Lunchrooms, and Accessible Classrooms. Limited access, in fact, begins right at the front door. I am a parent of two High School students and I use a power wheelchair for mobility. During the time my children have been in Howard County Public Schools I have encountered problems with access from Elementary – High School. This is my experience at Wilde Lake High School.

Everyone knows the Big Blue Button at the door. But, having an automatic door is just a piece in the process. In order to use the Big Blue Button you must either touch your Student ID to the Card Reader or press the button on the reader to alert the Reception Window to allow access. Then you get to press the Big Blue Button. Seems simple enough but from a seated position this Card Reader/Reception Window Buzzer is a pretty good reach. Likely out of reach for some, like myself. After you navigate the Card Reader/Reception Window Buzzer and Big Blue Button you scoot in before the door closes. Once in the lobby there is the Reception Window that is approximately 4' from the floor. Not great for interaction if you are seated.

The High School my children attend, Wilde Lake High, was built less than 10 years ago. Card Readers, Reception Window Buzzers, Big Blue Buttons and Reception Windows are all key to school access. Basic accessible features that should be installed with this consideration at time of construction. Those in place should be modified to provide access for **parents and children** with disabilities.

**John E. V. Sorensen**

**Howard County**

**District 12A**

**Cc:**

**Senator Clarence Lam**

**Delegate Jessica Feldmark**

**Delegate Terri L.Hill**