

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary
Anne Blackfield, Deputy Secretary

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BILL: SB 720
POSITION: INFO – Letter of Information
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
DATE: February 24, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is submitting a letter of information for **SB 720 – Education – Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)**. SB 720 would require, among other mandates, that local school systems procure artificial intelligence tools consistent with the provisions of Title 3.5, Subtitle 8 of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

In this letter of information, MDOD wishes to highlight another procurement requirement that was intended to ensure that students with disabilities are able to access educational tools and can learn alongside their nondisabled peers. There has been some misalignment in recent years between these accessibility requirements and efforts to promote AI in schools.

In 2022, the General Assembly passed the Equivalent and Nonvisual Access Accountability for K-12 Education Act (Acts of 2022, ch. 215). This law added a requirement that local school systems consult with MSDE and MDOD to ensure that digital tools procured for student instruction meet technical accessibility standards under Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is our understanding that digital tools inherently include digital tools that use AI.

Last year, language was included in the MSDE Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act (Acts of 2025, ch. 237) that exempted AI tools from the requirements under § 7-910. Specifically, the following language was added to § 7-910: “(a-1) Beginning with the 2025–2026 school year through the 2027–2028 school year, this section does not apply to the procurement and use of a digital tool that utilizes artificial intelligence, as defined in § 3.5–801 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, to support student learning.”

While MDOD is not aware of the specific rationale for the 3-year exemption of AI tools from the § 7-910 requirements, we wish to emphasize that the best way - and truly the only way - to support learning for students with disabilities is to ensure they can access educational tools in school. Once the exemption from the § 7-910 requirements expires at the end of the 2027-2028

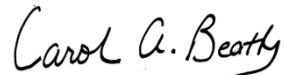
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school year, MDOD anticipates that local school systems will once again be expected to fulfill their obligations under § 7-910 for digital tools that utilize AI.

Students with disabilities are incredibly diverse in their educational needs. Some K-12 students may require intensive special education supports through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) while other students with disabilities can access standard curricula with the assistance of reasonable accommodations. AI is increasingly regarded as an important next step in assistive technology that can address these diverse learning needs. Such tools include apps for blind people that read documents and describe the immediate environment; apps that are using AI to learn to translate ASL into spoken language and vice versa; and AI tools that can help people with cognitive disabilities organize and communicate their ideas. Although AI tools have a potential to help people with disabilities, not all tools are created with accessibility standards in mind. It is always required that students with disabilities have full inclusion in educational settings, it would be particularly unfortunate to inadvertently prevent students with disabilities from benefitting further from AI through the acquisition of inaccessible AI tools.

Thank you for reviewing this letter of information.

Sincerely



Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities