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To: House Ways and Means Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House ways and Means Committee to give a favorable report to HB1013 - Prince George's County Special Education Service Delivery, Transparency, and Accountability Act.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland believes in the full capacity of blind and disabled people to achieve our dreams, despite the fact that many others do not. We know with proper education, opportunities, and alternative techniques, disabled people are capable of anything we set our minds to. Often the barriers to success are attitudinal—if we are not taught to believe in ourselves, we don't. Despite this, our membership includes highly-successful blind attorneys, musicians, artists, athletes, teachers, performers, STEM professionals, government workers, etc. Our journeys all begin with people who believe in us.

Often, a good attitude about disability begins in the classroom. It is true that disabled people need extra help and training when we are young. We often need one-on-one aides, extra assistive technology, mentorship to learn how we can be successful academically and beyond, etc. It is also abundantly clear how underserved disabled students are—aides do not know how to work with us, teachers and other special education professionals are inadequately-trained to deal with the incredible diversity of disabilities, and the general availability of services is quite limited. This bill will increase the availability and quality of services for disabled students, thus empowering us to achieve the currently-low expectations people have of our community—a community which contributes greatly to all sectors of employment and life. Supporting this bill is investing in a future full of opportunity for all Americans.

For those reasons and others, we ask for a favorable report on HB1013. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.