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January 27, 2026

**BILL: HB 0311 – Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Accessibility and Emergency Planning COMMITTEE: Ways and Means POSITION: Favorable with Amendments (FWA)**

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Honorable members of the Ways and Means Committee

I am Alita-Geri Carter, the owner of Qualequity Access, LLC., a consultancy grounded in data-driven transformation that advocates for quality, equity, access, and accessibility in healthcare and education. As a former practice pediatric nurse practitioner in a school-based health center and former school nurse I am writing to express my support for the intent of House Bill 311, which correctly identifies a life-safety gap in our public schools: the need for rigorous accessibility planning in emergency situations.

However, as currently drafted, the bill contains a confidentiality mandate that creates a **dangerous lack of transparency and places an unconscionable financial and legal burden** on families of students with disabilities.

**The Issue: Accountability vs. Secrecy**

While HB 311 requires school systems to report "instances in which a public-school facility became inaccessible for a student with a disability" during emergencies, **Section 7-1510(f)(3) classifies these reports as confidential and exempt from the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA).**

**This "secrecy clause" undermines the law in the following ways:**

**Barriers to Student Safety:** Parents are stripped of the right to know if their child's school has a documented history of failing to provide accessible evacuation routes.

**Financial Peril for Families:** By exempting these reports from the PIA, the bill forces families to hire private attorneys and file lawsuits just to access safety records through legal discovery. This effectively "paywalls" safety information, hurting low-income families most.

**Lack of Oversight:** Only members of the General Assembly may request these reports. This leaves the very families whose lives are at risk with no direct way to ensure that "identified weaknesses" are actually being corrected.

**Requested Amendments**

To ensure this bill serves its purpose without harming the community it aims to protect, I urge the Committee to adopt the following amendments:



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Parental Access Provision: Amend Section 7-1510(f)(3) to state that reports must be disclosed to the parents or legal guardians of students with disabilities attending the school in question.

**Public Accountability Summary:** Require the Center for School Safety to publish a redacted, annual summary of aggregate accessibility failures to allow for public oversight without compromising sensitive building security details.

**Proactive Audits:** Shift the language in Section 7-1510(f)(1)(III) from reactive reporting of past failures to a proactive requirement that schools certify all emergency exit routes meet ADA standards annually.

### **Conclusion**

We must not ask parents to choose between their child's safety and financial ruin. House Bill 311 is a vital step toward protecting students with disabilities, but it must not be used as a shield to hide facility failures from the public.

I respectfully urge a **Favorable with Amendments report on HB 311**.

Respectfully Submitted,  
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Resident, Howard County, MD