

HB0311 Public Schools - Individuals With Disabilities - Accessibility and Emergency Planning - Maryland Legislative session 2026

Position: Favorable

I am an Autistic woman and I grew up as a student attending a private school for students with “moderate” learning disabilities from 1995 to 2008 (and some of the best teachers I had at this school also had learning disabilities themselves). I have a B.A. degree in Psychology and since 2013, I have worked full-time in the developmental disability field. Since late 2015, I have been supporting children with developmental disabilities (21 years of age and younger) who receive Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver support services. Addressing the accessibility needs for students with disabilities during emergency response and evacuation situations is a topic of concern I hear.

When I was in school, we routinely had scheduled and unannounced fire alarm drills. (Thankfully, during those times, a fire was the only evacuation-related emergency we had to plan for). The teachers would frequently do lessons and discussions on how to respond in emergencies and discuss different ways to navigate the building.

I am a consistent supporter of life from womb to the tomb, so whenever I hear of a news story on a threat to school security or of a school mass shooting, I frequently wonder how the students in public schools with IEPs (Individual Education Plan) and 504 plans are being supported and are responding to the immediate actual or perceived threat, such as the students with disabilities at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, [helped by teacher aide Melodye Flores](#) (I believe guns and gun ownership should be regulated like driving privileges and car insurance, but that’s another discussion).

When I was in my elementary school years, I was highly sensitive to different sounds at certain volumes and pitches, and this was particularly true with alarm bells. There would be times I would be disoriented because my mind was trying to process the auditory input of the alarm bell. However, with practice of responding and evacuating the school building when there was a fire alarm or scheduled drill, I was better able to focus on evacuating the building as we were taught and instructed.

HB0311 will help schools support the students with disabilities who face accessibility barriers when faced with emergency and evacuation situations. I ask for this bill to be moved forward and I ask for a favorable outcome. Thank you.

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