



## TESTIMONY TO THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

### HB0311: Public Schools- Individuals With Disabilities- Accessibility and Emergency Planning

**POSITION:** Support

**BY:** Linda Kohn, President

**DATE:** February 11, 2026

**The League of Women Voters of Maryland supports House Bill 311**, which would require each Maryland public school system to report on facilities with physical barriers that limit accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and to identify instances when that lack of access impeded evacuation or an emergency response.

**The League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development, and ensure the safety of all children. In addition, the League’s policy statement on Equal Opportunity affirms the responsibility of all levels of government to provide equality of opportunity for education for all persons in the United States, including individuals with disabilities.**

A U.S. Government Accountability Office 2020 survey<sup>1</sup> found that two-thirds of U.S. public school districts had facilities with physical barriers limiting access for students and teachers with disabilities. In 2024, the Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division noted, “It is critical that students with disabilities, and family members, friends, neighbors, teachers and staff with disabilities, are able to access school building for learning as well as extracurricular activities and community events.”<sup>2</sup> The Department of Education’s Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights added, “Schools need to be accessible to everyone. More than 50 years after the enactment of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and thirty years after the enactment of the ADA, students with disabilities should not still encounter barriers in their public schools.”<sup>3</sup>

School-wide emergency planning is critical for the protection of students, teachers, and staff using those facilities. Adding inaccessibility information to schools’ regular safety evaluations is an important step towards ensuring the safety of all members of the school community, including those with disabilities.

**The League of Women Voters of Maryland and its 2,000 members urge a favorable report on House Bill 311.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-448>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-releases-webinar-department-educations-office-civil-rights-improve>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid