



## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 311**

*Public Schools – Individuals With Disabilities – Accessibility and Emergency Planning*

Submitted by Mat Rice on behalf of People On The Go Maryland

Committee: Ways and Means Hearing Date: In the House - Hearing 2/11 at 2:00 p.m.

**People On The Go Maryland** is the statewide self-advocacy and systems-advocacy organization run for and by people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. It is our mission to promote self-advocacy and civil rights throughout the state.

Thank you, Chair and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 311.

House Bill 311 helps make sure public schools think about accessibility for individuals with disabilities when they do safety evaluations and emergency planning.

In an emergency, every second matters. Students with disabilities must be able to evacuate safely and quickly, just like everyone else. When a school building becomes inaccessible, it can put students at risk and can slow down emergency response.

HB 311 does two important things:

- It requires each local school system to identify issues of accessibility for individuals with disabilities as part of regular school safety evaluations.
- It requires local school systems to include, in their annual emergency report, instances when a public school facility became inaccessible for a student with a disability in a way that could impede evacuation or an emergency response.

- It keeps that annual report confidential for safety reasons, while still allowing disclosure to a member of the General Assembly on request.

These changes matter because accessibility problems can happen even in buildings that are usually usable. For example, a broken elevator, a ramp blocked by snow or equipment, a door that is locked during the school day, or an alarm system that does not work for everyone can create a barrier during an evacuation.

By asking school systems to look for accessibility issues during safety evaluations, HB 311 helps schools find problems earlier and plan solutions. By asking school systems to report when a school became inaccessible for a student with a disability, the State can better understand what is happening and what needs to be fixed.

People with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities deserve to be safe at school and to have emergency plans that work in real life. HB 311 is a practical step that supports safety, planning, and accountability.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 311.

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