



House Ways and Means Committee

**HB 311: Public Schools – Individuals With Disabilities – Accessibility and  
Emergency Planning  
February 11, 2026**

**Position: Support**

The Arc Maryland is a statewide advocacy organization for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We work to protect and advance the rights of people with disabilities and to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. As such, we support HB 311 because we believe it will address equity, access, and the safety of all students who are educated in public facilities.

The aim of this legislation is to raise internal awareness of any issues of accessibility in public school buildings for individuals with disabilities and to ensure that local school systems are accountable to having effective emergency plans in place.

Isabel Mavrides-Calderón, the 18 year-old founder of disability advocacy group [Powerfully Isa](#) and one of [Teen Vogue's 21 Under 21](#), [put out a call on her Instagram](#). She asked people with disabilities whether their K-12 schools were prepared to meet their safety needs in emergency situations. Respondents overwhelmingly (80%) responded that their schools could not meet their needs in an emergency situation<sup>1</sup>. Maryland tackled this issue and in 2017 Cassidy's Law was passed, requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to update statewide emergency planning guidelines to better accommodate, safeguard, and evacuate individuals with disabilities on school grounds. Local school systems had to revise their own plans to align with those updated guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.weareteachers.com/students-with-disabilities/>

Despite this, some school buildings do not have necessary equipment to evacuate students in the event of an emergency, or front doors that are accessible by both students with and without disabilities. This is wrong and we must be better.

### **WHAT does this legislation do?**

This bill requires each local school system to, as a component of required regular safety evaluations of each public school, **identify and, if necessary, develop solutions for issues of accessibility for individuals with disabilities**. Each local school system must include instances in which a public school facility became inaccessible for a student with a disability in a manner that could impede evacuation or an emergency response. Changes to the bill from last year, that we believe address the concerns of the Maryland Center for School Safety include that the annual report to MCSS may be disclosed to a member of the General Assembly upon request, but otherwise (1) must be confidential; (2) may not be disclosed; and (3) is not considered a public record and must be exempt from inspection under the Maryland Public Information Act (PIA). This additional assurance language is important to protect student safety by not exposing potential facility vulnerabilities to a member of the public wishing to do harm.

### **WHY is this legislation important?**

Currently this data on accessibility is not collected in a comprehensive manner.

A 2019 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) indicated that approximately two-thirds of U.S. public school districts have schools with physical barriers that may limit access for people with disabilities.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) conducted a self-evaluation of 198 facilities to assess compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This assessment aimed to identify barriers to accessibility, including issues with entrances.<sup>3</sup> While the Montgomery County data is valuable, we do not currently have a comprehensive statewide understanding of what schools in our systems

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-448.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ww2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/facilities/ada/>

are and are not equipped with accessible entrances or other accessibility features for emergency egress.

This legislation is needed so we may understand how great the issue may be for future planning, and as schools are built and remodeled, work in a plan to address accessibility gaps.

**According to DLS in the Fiscal and Policy Note for HB311: the MCSS can carry out the bill's requirements with existing resources. The financial impact is \$0**

The Arc Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 311.

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