



Maryland Education Coalition



INSPIRES ACTION & POSITIVE CHANGE SO MARYLAND'S STUDENTS SUCCEED

Rick Tyler, Jr., Chair

Web site - www.marylandeducationcoalition.org *** Email – md.education.coaliton@gmail.com

Date: March 3, 2021

BILL: HB 1181: County Boards of Education-
Accessibility Standards-Digital Tools (Nonvisual
Access Accountability Act for Grades K-12
Education

POSITION: Support
COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means

The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) represents parents, civil rights, & special student population groups. For over 40 years, MEC has advocated for adequate, equitable policies and funding and systematic accountability for the estimated 900,000 students in Maryland’s public schools including students with disabilities.

MEC supports House Bill 1181, which would ensure local school system and Maryland State Department of Education accountability for accessible digital tools by requiring that a member of the vision department be part of the procurement team when requests for proposals are developed and issued. Additionally, vendors would be more accountable because they would be asked to submit a Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT) as part of their proposals. House Bill 1181 further provides that vendors who fail to meet accessibility standards will be fined.

When school buildings closed in March 2020 and education shifted to digital learning, students who are blind or otherwise unable to access learning through visual means, were denied the opportunity to participate or to participate fully in distance learning. Although accessible information and communication technology is required by law, lack of enforcement by local school systems and the Maryland State Department of Education makes this requirement ring hollow for the students who have been unable to learn effectively during the past year because their technology is not accessible to them.

House Bill 1181 would address this problem by creating the accountability that has been missing and would enable those who require nonvisual access to information and communication technology to obtain that access more easily. For these reasons, the MEC supports House Bill 1181.

Respectfully yours,
Rick Tyler, Jr, MEC Chair