



MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

Support Children with Disabilities

The following legislation affects children with disabilities and their families:

HB102/SB263: Education – Dependent Children of Active Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures

Allows active service members to enroll their children in advance for school. It also requires the new school to coordinate with the family and the old school when the child is a student with a disability.

- There are over 62,000 active duty, National Guard, and reserve members in Maryland. They have almost 44,000 children. This bill addresses some of the unique needs of military families.

HB311: Public Schools – Individuals with Disabilities – Accessibility and Emergency Planning

Requires each school system to identify accessibility issues for people with disabilities. They will also have to report on any issues that make it hard for people with disabilities to evacuate (leave) the building in an emergency.

- The purpose is to raise awareness of any issues of accessibility in public schools for people with disabilities, and to ensure that local school systems are held accountable to have effective emergency plans in place.
- School systems are already required to have emergency plans that include ways to get students, staff, and visitors with disabilities out of schools in emergency situations. Despite that, many people with disabilities still cannot access all parts of school buildings, or be removed safely in an emergency.

SB51: Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms – Use of Video Recording Devices

Requires schools to install at least one video camera in each self-contained classroom.

- Some families want cameras to be installed in their child's classroom. Most of the concern comes from families of children, who because of age, trauma, or disability, cannot verbally communicate what has happened at school.
- Some research leads to important questions: Are cameras a wise use of limited resources? Is anyone made safer because of a camera or does the use of video cameras promote a false sense of security? Will this lead to further segregation of students with disabilities from their peers without disabilities?

We strongly support investing in education, including education for students with disabilities. However, decisions about how much money is spent, how it is used, and when it is provided should also consider the needs of all Marylanders with disabilities. Funding for legislative initiatives should not come at the expense of other essential services, especially education personnel and Developmental Disabilities Administration Community Services that thousands of Marylanders rely on every day.

For additional information about these bills, please contact:

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council, RLondon@md-council.org

Ande Kolp, The Arc Maryland, AKolp@thearcmd.org