



House Bill 1181

*County Boards of Education - Accessibility Standards - Digital Tools
(Nonvisual Access Accountability Act for Grades K-12 Education)*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 3, 2021

From: Drew Jabin

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1181. While well-intentioned, this bill would place a costly mandate on school systems and county governments to carry out new state policy and provide all students with digital tools accessible by students with disabilities.

MACo recognizes the desire to create accommodations for all students, and each county school board and leadership approaches these access issues with the proper gravity. However, HB 1181 would substitute a one-size-fits-all state policy for that local judgment. Additionally, it would potentially place a costly mandate on school systems and county governments to carry out this new uniform state policy to provide all students with accessible digital tools regardless of whether the student is in need of this specialized tool.

The state funding for public schools is set via formula. Adding new cost components to the required school program belies the lengthy debates regarding these adequacy figures. So, counties have no choice but to support these new costs — competing for limited local funds against school facilities, public safety, roadway maintenance, and the full range of other essential public services.

Local school systems work to meet the unique needs of each student through individualized services and develop responses to changing technology and learning factors accordingly. HB 1181 upends this local governance with a rigid state policy, triggering unknown costs without accompanying resources. Accordingly, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 1181 and requests a **UNFAVORABLE** report.