



Support with amendment

Maryland Independent College and University Association

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Budget and Taxation Committee

SB 1014 - Assembly Areas – State-Funded Construction or Renovation - Assisted Listening System - Requirement

Tina Bjarekull, President

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting *SB 1014 - Assembly Areas – State-Funded Construction or Renovation - Assisted Listening System – Requirement*. This bill mandates the use of assistive listening systems in any assembly area that a recipient uses State funds for construction or renovation. The bill also creates a Hearing Accessibility Advisory Board to make recommendations on regulations to implement the bill and to consider applications for waivers to the bill's requirements.

MICUA member institutions strive to meet the needs of all students who are hearing impaired. Each MICUA campus provides students with hearing loss a personalized plan to accommodate their needs. These accommodations are required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accommodations range from portable wireless systems, American Sign Language Interpreters, remote microphones, digital amplification, and voice to print plug-ins for producing written scripts. All of these resources are provided to the students at no additional cost.

MICUA supports the goals of the bill but has significant concerns about a mandate requiring that an assistive listening system be installed in every classroom. It simply isn't practical to mandate the installation of this technology in every classroom. Furthermore, it is an inefficient use of State funds to mandate that every classroom, regardless of size, install assistive listening systems when the needs of students are already being met.

MICUA respectfully requests an amendment that would align the bill with federal ADA requirements and only require the installation of assistive listening systems in assembly areas that require the use of a public address system. This amendment would be consistent with federal law and would be a reasonable, rational, and fiscally prudent way to meet the needs of students with hearing loss.

MICUA respectfully requests a favorable report with amendment for SB 1014.