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HB 214 Human Services – Maryland Assistive Technology Program – Establishment
House Appropriations Committee
February 11, 2025
FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Tammy Bresnahan; I am the Senior Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland. On behalf of AARP Maryland's 850,000 members, we thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **House Bill 214 Maryland Assistive Technology Program - Establishment**. This legislation establishes the Maryland Assistive Technology Program within the Department of Disabilities to provide essential assistive technology devices and services to individuals with disabilities. AARP Maryland strongly supports HB 214 because it recognizes the critical need for access to assistive technology that empowers older Marylanders to maintain their independence and quality of life.

Assistive technology is a lifeline for many older adults and individuals with disabilities, enabling them to perform daily tasks, stay connected with their communities, and age in place. Devices such as hearing aids, screen readers, mobility aids, and adaptive equipment bridge the gap between limitations and the ability to live fully. For older Marylanders, these tools not only support their well-being but also reduce reliance on caregivers and long-term care facilities, alleviating strain on families and public resources.

HB 214's establishment of the Assistive Technology Services Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund is especially important. By ensuring the sustainability of this program, Maryland is taking a proactive step toward guaranteeing access to assistive technology for all who need it, regardless of financial barriers. Furthermore, requiring interest earnings to be credited to the Fund demonstrates a thoughtful approach to long-term financial stability.

AARP Maryland applauds the bill's holistic approach, which encompasses not only the distribution of devices but also the provision of related services. Proper training and support are essential for individuals to fully benefit from assistive technology, ensuring that these tools are used effectively and efficiently.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 214. By passing this legislation, Maryland will lead by example, demonstrating its commitment to equity, inclusion, and the dignity of all residents, including our older adults.

Thank you for your consideration, we respectfully ask the Committee for favorable report. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me at tbresnahan@aarp.org or by calling 410-302-8451.

