The Anne Arundel County Board of Education OPPOSES Senate Bill 604 - Visual Impairments - Requirements for Teacher Training, Student Screening, and Maryland Medical Assistance Program Coverage. This bill requires the Professional Standards and Teacher Education Board by July 1, 2018, to require teachers to complete a specified training course regarding understanding and recognizing symptoms of visual impairments as a condition of renewing a teaching certificate. A vision screening conducted by a local board of education or local health department (LHD) must include administration of a specified computerized screening to detect possible symptoms of visual impairments. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) must provide each LHD with the equipment for the screenings. Beginning January 1, 2018, Medicaid must provide vision rehabilitation and habilitation for all individuals with income below 133% of federal poverty guidelines.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) has several concerns with Senate Bill 604, most notably teacher certification requirements being mandated or dictated by State legislation. AACPS also opposes any definition of handicapping conditions that exceeds what is stipulated under federal law, as well as requiring a computerized screening for visual impairments to each student with an Individualized Education Program, regardless of any suspected difficulties with that student’s vision. Such requirements would result in the loss of instructional time for students with disabilities in order to complete unnecessary assessments.

Accordingly, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education respectfully urges an UNFAVORABLE committee report on Senate Bill 604.