



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

May 24, 2016

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Technology and Telecommunications Task Force, the undersigned organizations would like to offer the following recommendations to the Department of Education (The Department) to clarify the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition of more than 100 national disability organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Telecommunications and Technology Task Force focuses on ensuring national policy on matters of telecommunications and technology, including assistive technology, helps move society toward our ultimate goal of full inclusion of all people with a disability.

The CCD Technology and Telecommunications Task Force urges the Department to issue guidance that ensures effective and meaningful opportunity for students with disabilities to participate in assessments consistent with guidance issued by the Department of Justice regarding testing accommodations, http://www.ada.gov/regs2014/testing_accommodations.html.

Students with disabilities must be able to use the assistive technology that they regularly use to access instruction and the general education curriculum to demonstrate proficiency on assessments. Asking a student to learn new text-to-speech systems, new magnification technology, or other access features built into assessments results in the assessment measuring a student's ability to learn the new technology rather than measuring their expertise on academic content and unfairly penalizes students with disabilities. In addition, many access features simply cannot be built into assessments and compatibility with assistive technology is the only way to provide independent access for students with disabilities, e.g. voice recognition, and switch input. Forcing these students to use human scribes or other human accommodations rather than allowing them to demonstrate their proficiency independently is not acceptable.

To support students' ability to use their own assistive technology, digital assessments must be developed in conformance with nationally accepted accessibility standards. Guidance from the Department should recognize the barrier created for students with disabilities when assessments are designed without a fundamental requirement for digital accessibility and support for interoperability with assistive technology. We urge the Department to adopt or include by reference the recently issued guidance of the Department of Justice on this issue.

Thank you for your consideration of these views. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact one of the CCD Technology and Telecommunications Task Force Co-Chairs: Mark Richert, 4justice@concentric.net; Audrey Busch, audrey.busch@ataporg.org; Sara Rosta, sara.rosta@PPSV.com; Michael Brogioli, mbrogioli@resna.org; or Eric Buehlmann, eric.buehlmann@ndrn.org

Sincerely,

American Foundation for the Blind
Association for Assistive Technology Act Programs
Perkins
Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
National Disability Rights Network
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
The Arc
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association