

Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM HIGH) Act

Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and Orrin Hatch (R- Utah)

New technologies hold the promise of greater accessibility for students with disabilities. Electronic delivery systems and electronic course materials can more easily adapt to the needs of individual learners. However, not all technologies at use in our colleges are accessible to students with disabilities, even though non-discrimination laws require accessibility. Federal nondiscrimination laws were drafted long before the use of electronic instructional materials and other technologies on college campuses became widespread, and they often do not contain the performance criteria or specifications that are necessary for accessible electronic materials.

To help ensure that instructional technologies they adopt are accessible, colleges and developers of educational materials need better guidance from experts in the field. A 2011 report from a federal Advisory Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials in Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities noted the need for guidelines on accessible electronic instructional materials and technologies. The bipartisan AIM HIGH Act builds on that recommendation by establishing a commission of stakeholder groups to develop guidelines on accessibility.

The AIM HIGH Act would help colleges select and adopt innovative technologies that can be used by all students. In turn, this increased demand will create a better market for accessible technologies and help remove the significant barriers that some students with disabilities face in accessing course materials when new technologies are introduced in the classroom.

The AIM HIGH Act would:

- Create an **independent commission of stakeholder groups**—including representatives of the disability community, institutions of higher education, and developers of educational materials and technologies—**to develop voluntary guidelines for electronic instructional materials and related information technology.**
- Ensure that **all stakeholder groups are bought in** to the guidelines by requiring a supermajority (75 percent) of the commission to approve them.
- **NOT create any new legal obligations** for institutions to adhere to the voluntary guidelines.
- **NOT remove or alter any existing legal protections** for students with disabilities, such as those found in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.