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February 23, 2017

The Honorable Phil Roe, M.D.
United States House of Representatives
316 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Courtney
United States House of Representatives
2348 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Roe and Congressman Courtney:

Benetech commends you for agreeing to introduce the Accessible Instructional Materials in Higher Education (AIM HE) Act. As the nonprofit operator of Bookshare, the largest library serving students with disabilities such as blindness and dyslexia, we are committed to seeing that the students we serve have more opportunity for success. We believe strongly that the best way to solve the accessibility challenge is for postsecondary institutions to recommend the purchase of, and publishers to supply, mainstream digital textbooks and curriculum that work well for everybody. We have been a key leader in this effort with our Born Accessible campaign, working closely with the publishing industry to ensure that more and more ebooks are created fully accessibly. We also are spearheading a Buy Accessible campaign to encourage educational institutions to influence accessibility by demanding it through the market.

Although we have already delivered more than 10 million accessible books to students with disabilities, we strongly believe in mainstream accessibility. As someone who has been working in the accessibility field for over 25 years, and a former member of the Commission on Accessible Instructional Materials, I know how important this issue is. The provisions of your bill are a strong leap forward in enabling the first and most important recommendation from the Commission.

As a former Silicon Valley technology entrepreneur, I know how important market demand is in shaping the priorities of technology companies. We believe that the strong guidance envisioned in this legislation will provide a clear path forward for accessibility, lessening the chances that a given company will forget about the needs of those with disabilities when they create new educational technology products.

I applaud your leadership on this important legislative priority, and I strongly urge your colleagues to join you in supporting its swift passage.

Sincerely,


James R. Fruchterman
President & CEO