



House Bill 1292

Public Schools – Special Education Classrooms – Use of Recording Devices

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: February 26, 2020

From: Drew Jabin

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 1292. While well-intentioned, this bill would place a costly mandate on school systems and county governments to carry out new state policy and install video recording devices in each special education classroom in each public school.

As a rule, MACo resists state policies that result in costly or burdensome local implementation. HB 1292 would implement a costly, burdensome mandate for county governments to install and maintain recording devices in any classroom where the majority of students are special education students. Under state law, counties have no choice but to support these costs for county boards of education—competing for limited local funds against school construction, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services. Amidst a broad-based re-thinking of Maryland’s education priorities under the Kirwan Blueprint legislation, HB 1292 introduces a substantial new mandated cost fully outside the basis for that new vision for school funding.

Ultimately, HB 1292 is costly on multiple fronts. The Fiscal Note prepared by the Department of Fiscal Services recognizes direct costs, citing figures into the millions of dollars for each of the larger school systems. Another less clear, but still significant concern is ongoing administrative costs to maintain the resulting footage and fully comply under Maryland’s Public Information Act, especially since this video footage will virtually always contain images of minors. Lastly, there is the cost of training staff and faculty in the purpose and use of these cameras, which would be a time intensive process.

This bill, as written, is a potentially significant unfunded mandate for Boards of Education. Counties obviously encourage avenues to create safe environments for all students, but do oppose the broadly mandated provisions currently within HB 1292. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 1292 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.