



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**

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Ways & Means Committee

February 26, 2020

**House Bill 1292: Public Schools - Special Education Classrooms - Use of Video Recording Devices
Letter of Information**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) works to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life, including children with disabilities. Maryland educates more than 100,000 students with disabilities who require a variety of services and supports.

This bill would allow the use of video recording devices in separate, segregated classrooms.

State and federal law requires students with disabilities be educated alongside their peers without disabilities. **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the primary federal law governing the education of students with disabilities, requires the provision of a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment in which a student's needs can be met.** Least restrictive environment means that, to the maximum extent appropriate, school districts must educate students with disabilities in the regular classroom with appropriate aids and supports along with their peers without disabilities, unless a student's individualized education program (IEP) requires some other arrangement.

The DD Council is not taking a position about whether this bill is warranted, but is rather seeking to inform the committee about the reality of video cameras in this type of special education setting.

There are serious questions to be asked: Are video recording devices a wise use of limited resources? Is anyone made safer in the presence of a camera? Does the placement of video cameras promote a false sense of security, therefore unintentionally resulting in further segregation of students with developmental disabilities from their typically developing classmates?

TASH, a well-respected national non-profit group who advocate for the inclusion of all students in the general education classroom, has written extensively on this subject. Their position paper, [Camera Surveillance in Self-Contained Classrooms](#), provides a thorough examination of the issues considered by this bill:

- **Installing video cameras only in special education classrooms may create or strengthen a bias toward restrictive settings.** The reliance on more restrictive settings for safety contradicts the peer-reviewed research on context and inclusive practice. Students with complex support needs can learn—and often learn as much, if not more—in general education contexts.



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- **Video camera surveillance may promote a false sense of security rather than safety.** Video evidence can be used to document abuse, but unless video is monitored in real-time, it is unlikely that camera surveillance will prevent abuse from happening.
- Using video camera surveillance as “evidence” of harmful staff behavior can be unreliable and/or easy to circumvent.
- Installing video cameras only in special education classrooms presents the risk that students with disabilities themselves may become the targets of surveillance.
- **Purchasing, installing, and maintaining video cameras is costly and uses scarce educational resources.**
- Relying on video cameras in special education classrooms does not build trust with either students or teachers.

Public resources should be invested in proactive strategies that keep all students safe, happy, ready to learn, and successful when in school.

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