



HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY

February 21, 2020

To: MD State House Ways and Means Committee

CC: MD State Legislature – Howard County Delegates
MD State Legislature – Howard County Senators

From: Education Advocacy Committee – Howard County Autism Society (HCAS)

Subject: HCAS Support of HB1242/SB1019 – Use of Video Recording Devices in Special Education Classrooms

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

On behalf of the Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) and specifically its Education Advocacy Committee, I am writing to you today to express our support for HB1242 – Use of Video Recording Devices in Special Education Classrooms – submitted by Delegate Guyton.

We have all seen the news articles, several each year, of camera footage capturing abuse of children in our schools. Yet, for every one of these instances, there are many more reported or suspected cases of abuse that could be confirmed or refuted if there was a systematic way to capture video evidence in the matter.

Children in Special Education classrooms are especially vulnerable to abuse because they often lack the ability to fully communicate any concerns adequately, opening up potential for egregious and continuing victimization. This bill is designed to provide recordings in areas where these children may be isolated with limited staff and students, and has the potential to significantly reduce abuse, neglect, bullying, harassment or other behaviors/violations against our children who may not be able to fully advocate for their own safety and well-being. We must do better to protect this vulnerable population of students and continue to provide quality instruction in a safe environment conducive to learning. This bill provides a much-needed step towards that end.

We also believe that this bill as written addresses any potential concerns about the use of the cameras for monitoring teachers and it sets forth clear guidelines for viewing the recordings. In our opinion, this balanced bill provides much needed protections to our most vulnerable children without endangering the privacy of the children or staff. To that end, we recommend that implementation of this important protection be done with sufficient forethought and

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planning to provide consistency across the state. It is imperative that the school systems, staff and parents can be confident that this key initiative is installed with rigor and efficacy and with proper safeguards. A poorly implemented system could provide unintended negative consequences and derail the significant benefits that this program is designed to bring.

Thank you in advance for your strong consideration in supporting this bill for the protection of our community.

We would like to thank Ms. Lori Scott for her work in advocating for this bill, and Delegate Guyton for sponsoring this bill on the floor. Your efforts on behalf of our community are very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



Roger E. Thibaudeau, Jr.
Chair, Education Advocacy Cmte
Howard County Autism Society



Melissa Rosenberg
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