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Testimony for Senate Bill 180

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Public and Nonpublic Schools – Auto-Injectable Epinephrine and Bronchodilators – Use, Availability, Training, and Policies

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony today. My name is Micaela Fritz, and I am a pediatric nurse practitioner at Johns Hopkins Hospital. Prior to my role as a nurse practitioner at Johns Hopkins Children's Center, I was a school nurse for Howard County Public School System in the fall of 2021. I am testifying today in support of this bill to ensure that no student with asthma, diagnosed or undiagnosed, will be without the lifesaving measure they need should they experience respiratory distress in school.

I would like to note that the views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect the policies or positions of my employer, Johns Hopkins Hospital.

In my previous experience as a school nurse, I was responsible for the medical care of over 800 middle school students at a public school. Many of the students I cared for had chronic medical conditions, including asthma. I had an incident in Fall of 2021 where a student who was a known asthmatic needed albuterol. I administered albuterol as prescribed, his cough subsided, and he returned to class. Approximately 4 hours later, he returned with audible wheezing and a violent cough that caused him to vomit continuously. I tried to administer his albuterol inhaler again, however, the pump stopped working. The student had an extra albuterol inhaler in his pocket that his mom had given him that morning. Under the guidelines, I should have confiscated this medication and not allowed him to use it. Instead, he self-administered the albuterol from home and 911 was called. Fortunately- the medicine helped. By the time EMS arrived, his vomiting and wheezing had subsided.

This experience had a profound impact on me professionally and personally. I was thankful that his mother had enough foresight to have him carry another albuterol inhaler just in case, even though he was not supposed to have it. The implications for what would have happened to this student are vast. What would have helped me in this case would be a law like Senate Bill 180. Not only would I have had my own albuterol inhaler supply, but I would also have had permission to use it in emergency situations much like the other medications school's stock.

I strongly urge you to support this bill, which will help to ensure that all children with asthma in Maryland have access to life-saving medication at school in an emergency. Thank you.