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Senior

To the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am in support of the Maryland Seizure Safe Bill/Brynleigh's Act/SB0549.

Seizure recognition and response training for school personnel would be beneficial and it would be the right thing to do.

There are 3.4 million people living with epilepsy in the United States, 59,900 of which are people in Maryland. 1 in 26 people will develop epilepsy at some time in their life. The average incidence, or new people to develop epilepsy each year, is roughly 150,000 or 48 people for every 100,000 people.

When I had my first seizure, I was in middle school working on a science project with my classmates. I think everyone was surprised when I suddenly dropped and began seizing while unconscious. My classmates got my teachers attention when she came to help me and was unclear about what was going on. She didn't know much about seizures and had never had any training. She sent me to the nurse's office where they asked what happened, but after I explained they looked confused, was determined I had just been shocked and sent me back to class. My parents didn't get notified until I told them when I got home from school.

When I went to high school, I spoke to one of the coaches about playing a sport. We had to fill out physical forms and on mine it stated that I had epilepsy. The coach expressed their concern about me participating in the sport due to my epilepsy because it may have a negative impact on my teammates. The coach just didn't know about seizures.

If my science teacher in middle school had been educated and trained, not only would I have been in safe hands with a clear direction on how to get help, but my teacher would have been safe too. She would have known how to respond not only to me but also how to reassure my classmates. If the school nurse had been educated, she may have reached out to my parents or responded in a different way.

In high school, if the coaches had been educated, they may not have discouraged me from participating in a sport. The coaches may not have been fearful of what "might" happen in the event a seizure were to occur, and they would be more confident in how to handle the situation. My coaches could feel safer.

Not only does seizure education and response training for school personnel provide a safer environment for those having seizures, it allows the school personnel to feel more confident if an event were to occur. It might also help those students that are present to understand the events better as well. Not to mention it would help eliminate the stigma around epilepsy.

Thank you for considering this important bill, and I urge you to support it.

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