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SUPPORT-SB0549-BRYNLEIGH'S ACT

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

My family are your constituents, and we are writing in support of the Maryland Seizure Safe School Act, or Brynleigh Act (SB0549), sponsored by Senator Young in the Senate and Representative Kerr in the House. This state legislation would ensure all school personnel, including nurses, teachers, and volunteers, are not only prepared but can recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to students experiencing seizures.

Although my son, a second grader at Mary B. Neal Elementary in Charles County, does not have epilepsy, he has autism spectrum disorder and spends his days in inclusion classrooms with students with a myriad of diagnoses. He has friends with epilepsy, physical handicaps and other disabilities. Due to the myriad of medical, physical and mental needs in our schools, the need for school personnel trained in seizure recognition and response is great. Students deserve to have staff that are trained in helping them in medical emergencies and know the seizure response protocols. This staff can quickly help students experiencing medical emergencies, keep other students in the classrooms calm, and assist with seizure management.

Approximately 1 in 26 people will develop epilepsy in their lifetime, 1 in 10 people will have a single seizure in their lifetime, and approximately 7900 Maryland children currently have an active epilepsy diagnosis, but there is only one nurse per 913 students. It is of vital importance that school staff know how to recognize and respond to a seizure should one occur in their classroom, school bus, or specialized area. Quick response to a seizure cannot wait for a nurse to arrive. It is not enough for school nurses to be the only ones with that training. Many students will have their first seizure while in school, so this is not just a matter of following a plan that is already in place. Some will have seizures in front of their classmates; when personnel are able to respond calmly and knowledgeably it makes the experience safer and less scary for everyone.

The Brynleigh Act (HB675) will ensure that all school personnel have some familiarity with seizure recognition, and in doing so, will make all our children safer in their school environment. Five other states have passed similar bills, and many other states will follow. We hope that Maryland will, as always, lead by example. Please support this legislation, for my family and others like us.

Sincerely,

Emily Grdic  
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