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**House Bill 1292/SB 1019 Public Schools-Special Education
Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices**

Position: Support

Ways and Means Committee

Hello~

I am asking for your support in passing this important bill.

Cameras are very much needed in our segregated classrooms.

I am the mom to an amazing young man with Down syndrome. He is so cool. He is my everything. He also has limited speech. He struggles to retell/recall an event after it has happened. He forgets details, and doesn't have the ability to speak to how serious and or scary an event was/is. All of these things make him vulnerable to being taken advantage of.

I am on multiple types of social media, and on many Facebook pages and communities with other parents of children with special needs.

There is one thing that scares me to death~ someone taking advantage of my child and physically harming him.

At least once a month a parent will post asking for help regarding the bruises, scratches, bite marks, or discrepancies on what they have been told happened vs what the evidence shows. There are statements that are made, then retracted, and then other details come out, and often times-the truth is never found. With cameras there to record the incident, protect the teacher, and make clear what happened before, during and after the incident-we can find the truth.

I wrote an article that was picked up by The Mighty:

I woke from a terrible dream this morning. In my dream, I had watched someone hit my child. She hit him and pushed him sideways for throwing the ball over the fence. I was appalled. I was so angry. I stood there frozen, helpless to do anything.

Yes, it was a dream. But it has been the truth for many families. And in my family.

I have been told my son was dragged down the hallway by an aide. He was in the second grade, just a tiny little guy who was clearly telling them "Something is wrong."

He didn't act that way to be trouble. He didn't act that way to cause a scene. He was overwhelmed, exhausted, had sensory overload issues and needed help. He did not need to be dragged down the hall. He needed kindness and compassion. He needed help.

My dream is timely. Next week a bill will go to the Maryland House of Delegates on cameras in all self-contained special education classrooms. In many schools, there are cameras in the hallways for safety and security. But sadly, they are missing from the special education classrooms, one of the biggest areas where discipline and behaviors tend to happen.

Don't let them tell you it's a cost issue — it's only \$400 for an extra camera.

Don't let them tell you it's about the teachers being uncomfortable — cameras will protect them as well.

Don't let them tell you it's always the adults abusing kids — sometimes it's other students.

Enough horrible videos on Facebook.

Enough heartbreaking videos of bruised children.

Please support us here in Maryland next week.

Please start the movement in your state!

Please be the voice for a child that struggles to speak.

I am hoping this will help you to see clearly how very important it is to have cameras for our most vulnerable. They deserve a voice, and they deserve protection.

Sincerely, Michelle Tetschner