



January 18, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Chair, Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
Annapolis, MD

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee:

On behalf of the Epilepsy Foundation and our local chapter, Epilepsy Foundation of Maryland, we urge your support of Senate Bill 225, also known as *Brynleigh's Act*. This bill supports a critical priority for the epilepsy community – safety and continuity of care in the event of a seizure. This legislation makes certain that school personnel, including nurses, teachers, and volunteers, are not only prepared but can recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to a student experiencing a seizure. Even more importantly, the legislation safeguards physician-directed care in the school setting, allowing students to access necessary and potentially life-saving medication. The legislation would also mandate the use of a Seizure Action Plan, to be distributed to all personnel charged with the care of a student, to ensure that they have access to information that may be specific or unique to that student. Taken together, provisions in this bill represent important protections necessary to ensure the safety of students living with epilepsy while they are attending school or a school-related function.

The Epilepsy Foundation is the leading national voluntary health organization that speaks on behalf of the at least 3.4 million Americans with epilepsy and seizures. The local chapter, Epilepsy Foundation of Maryland, advocates and provides services for the almost 59,900 individuals living with epilepsy throughout the state. Collectively, we foster the wellbeing of children and adults affected by seizures through research programs, educational activities, advocacy, and direct services. Epilepsy is a medical condition characterized by seizures, which are sudden surges of electrical activity in the brain, that affects a variety of mental and physical functions. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy, and approximately 1 in 10 people will experience a seizure, at some point in their lifetime. A seizure can happen to any person, in any place, at any time, and it is vital that school personnel are prepared to appropriately and effectively respond in this event. Compared to students with other health concerns, one Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study showed that students aged 6-17 years living with epilepsy were more likely to miss 11 or more days of school in the past year.¹ For these students, proper seizure first aid and continuity of care while they are at school is crucial to ensuring they can reach their full potential with as minimal disruption to their learning environment as possible.

Brynleigh's Act would require school personnel, including school nurses, to undergo a short training to learn how to recognize a seizure and how to properly administer seizure first aid. The seizure recognition and first aid training, developed by Epilepsy Foundation of America, and available online or through in-person training provided by the Epilepsy Foundation, would come at no additional cost to schools, school personnel, or the state,

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017, May 09). Healthy Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/npao/epilepsy.htm>



and would educate personnel on different seizure types, general seizure first aid, how to recognize a seizure emergency, and how to best socially and academically support students living with epilepsy. Knowing what to do in the event of a seizure is just as important as knowing what not to do. For instance, it is a fairly common misconception that you must put something in the person's mouth who is experiencing a seizure to prevent them from biting, or even swallowing, their tongue. This is false, dangerous and could cause more harm to the person experiencing a seizure – and the person administering first aid. By completing the short training,

Senate Bill 225, if passed, would also facilitate continuity of care while a student is at school by providing school personnel with a Seizure Action Plan, containing information specific to the student's unique disorder and by preserving access to physician-prescribed medication while on school grounds. While seizure first aid is largely consistent no matter who the student is, there are times when a particular student may have specific triggers or treatment protocols that are individual to them. The Seizure Action Plan, which would be filled out in consultation with the child's physician, provides school personnel with important considerations, precautions, and contact information to help ensure aid is timely, tailored to the student's needs, and properly administered. Further, SF 2056 would mandate that children have access to their anti-seizure medications or seizure rescue medications on school grounds which is critical to ensuring continuity of care, and in the case of seizure rescue medication, necessary to stop a seizure emergency.

The Epilepsy Foundation and Epilepsy Foundation of Maryland urge your support for Senate Bill 225 – *Brynleigh's Act* - which will ensure school personnel are equipped with the information and skills necessary to keep children safe at school. Please feel free to contact Abbey Roudebush, Esq., Senior Manager, Government Relations & Advocacy at our National Headquarters, at aroudebush@efa.org or 301-918-3784 with any questions or follow-up.

Sincerely,

Laura Thrall
President & CEO
Epilepsy Foundation