

Ms. Shelly Hettleman, State Senate, District 11  
11 Bladen Street, Office 203  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Support for SB0665

Dear Senator Hettleman (Shelly),

As an Educational Specialist and a constituent, I urge you to support SB0665, Public Schools - Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms - Use of Video Recording Devices, being sponsored by Senator Peters, requiring cameras in special education classrooms to protect children who are not able to communicate their mistreatment to their families, due to severe handicapping conditions. Stories like those listed below are examples of situations in which children were being harmed in their educational settings and were not able to speak for themselves:

\*The Terrence Rideau case in Keller, Texas in 2008: A teenager with Traumatic Brain Injury at the public high school was being abused by his teacher and coming home with various injuries, including a large bump on his head, a broken thumb, and two dislocated knees. Subsequently, after this case was heard, a law was passed in Texas, requiring cameras in the classroom to prevent student abuse at school. To maintain privacy, the Texas law requires that recordings are stored on campus, separate from any general surveillance, so only those who are authorized have access to the footage gathered in the classrooms.

\*The Gage Andrews case in Statesville, North Carolina: A 9-year-old autistic child, along with several other classmates in a North Carolina public school were disciplined by being thrown into trash receptacles outside of the classroom, being told "if you act like trash, you will be treated like trash". The family went to court to investigate and ultimately proved that the teacher was systematically punishing his special education students in this way, along with other heinous behaviors like attempting to suffocate students. North Carolina does not have a law requiring cameras in classrooms, so it was difficult to prove the physical or verbal abuse, which continued over a two-year period of time, even though other faculty members at the school reported the abuse to authorities.

I strongly support passage of SB0665 to protect our most vulnerable children from predatory behavior on the part of teachers and teacher assistants, who should not be working with children in educational settings. As you know, I have worked in many aspects of education for 4 decades, as a teacher, an administrator, a diagnostician, a researcher, an advocate, and a teacher trainer. Incidents like the ones mentioned above are shocking, extraordinarily harmful, and preventable, with cameras in classrooms where students are not able to speak for themselves. Not only is "hard" evidence available with cameras, but the mere installment of cameras is a deterrent to those who might otherwise engage in abusive behaviors. In the article, "*Effectiveness*

*and Social Costs of Public Area Surveillance for Crime Prevention.*” Brandon Welsh, David P. Farrington, and Sema A. Taheri in the Annual Review of Law and Social Science (Vol. 11. 2015. pp. 111-130) discuss that the use of cameras, combined with other tools, is one of the most effective ways to deter and reduce crime.

Thank you, Shelly, for considering support of this upcoming bill.

Sincerely,

*Fran*

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