

SB299- Education- Public and Nonpublic Schools- Seizure Action Plans (Brynleigh's Act)
House Ways and Means Committee
March 22, 2022

Position: Support

The Arc Maryland is the largest statewide advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the rights and quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We firmly support of the Maryland Seizure Safe School Act, or Brynleigh's Act.

Brynleigh's Act includes several critical components including training school personnel on seizure detection and first aid response on a biennial basis; mandating Seizure Action Plans to be on file for every student diagnosed with epilepsy or a seizure disorder and requiring those plans be available to all personnel responsible for the student; ensuring the administration of medications approved by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration; and a Good Samaritan clause. **Research shows that approximately 1 in 10 people will have a seizure in their lifetime.ⁱ** Despite this very common condition, seizures (and how to respond to them) is still largely misunderstood. Research also shows that **20% of people with an intellectual disability have epilepsyⁱⁱ**. Children with prior unrecognized seizures are at higher risk for presenting behavior issues at school. Children may be having seizures that appear as if they are not focusing on the instruction. They may be exhausted or confused, which may manifest as irritability or anxiousness. **It has been established that children with long-standing epilepsy have behavior challenges at rates almost 5 times higher than general population children.ⁱⁱⁱ** The bright light in these statistics is that often, once epilepsy is discovered and addressed, behavior challenges often diminish.

Seizure training and awareness will not only help keep students, potential visitors to the school, and school personnel safe, it will also help de-mystify and decrease the stigma associated with seizures and seizure conditions.

There are approximately 7,900 children living with epilepsy in Maryland. This amounts to a ratio of roughly 913 students for every 1 school nurse.^{iv} Education, information, and training on seizure recognition would ensure school personnel are prepared and can recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to a student experiencing a seizure, thus creating a safer environment for every student in Maryland's public schools.

Parents, as critical partners in education, would be actively involved in collaboration with school personnel to create a seizure action plan for their student with a seizure condition. That plan will be kept by the school and provided to staff and volunteers with direct contact with the student.

School personnel must be prepared and enabled to respond quickly and safely to seizure incidents. **Timely seizure identification and care is critical to the health of a student.** Often, care to a student who is having a seizure cannot wait for a nurse to arrive.

To date, **12 states have successfully passed Seizure Safe Schools legislation,**^v including neighboring states Virginia and New Jersey. This number is more than double the number of states who had Seizure Safe Schools laws in the books just a year ago.

We hope that Maryland will follow in its tradition of leading by example to create positive school learning environments that are supportive and welcoming to all students and we encourage a favorable report on SB299.

Sincerely,



Ande Kolp
Executive Director
akolp@thearcmd.org
[443-851-9351](tel:443-851-9351)
www.thearcmd.org

Key facts

- Epilepsy is a chronic noncommunicable disease of the brain that affects people of all ages.
- **Around 50 million people worldwide have epilepsy, making it one of the most common neurological diseases globally.**
- Nearly 80% of people with epilepsy live in low- and middle-income countries.
- It is estimated that up to 70% of people living with epilepsy could live seizure-free if properly diagnosed and treated.
- The risk of premature death in people with epilepsy is up to three times higher than for the general population.
- Three quarters of people with epilepsy living in low-income countries do not get the treatment they need.
- In many parts of the world, people with epilepsy and their families suffer from stigma and discrimination.

Source: World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/epilepsy>

ⁱ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/epilepsy>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6013187/>

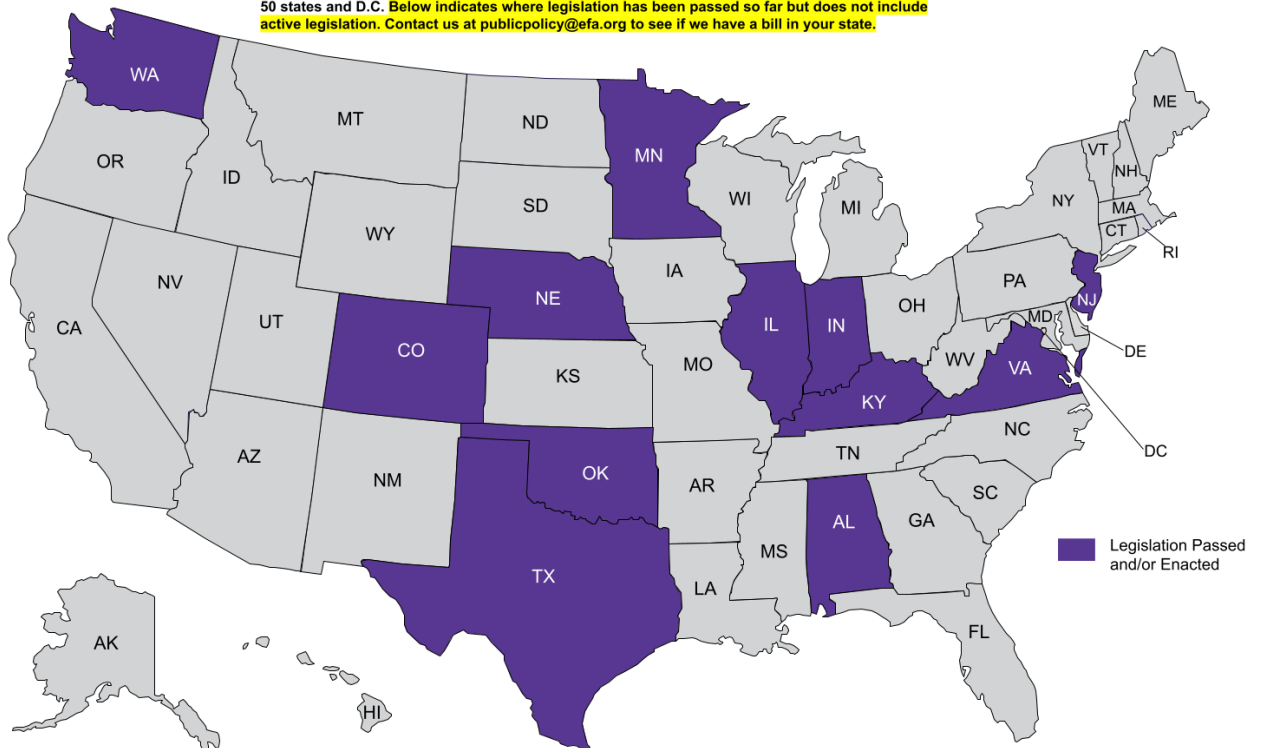
ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3182400/>

^{iv} <https://www.epilepsy.com/release/2022/1/maryland-advocates-organizations-and-elected-officials-champion-seizure-safe-school-legislation>

Passage of Seizure Safe Schools Legislation



The Epilepsy Foundation has a nationwide initiative to enact Seizure Safe Schools legislation in all 50 states and D.C. Below indicates where legislation has been passed so far but does not include active legislation. Contact us at publicpolicy@efa.org to see if we have a bill in your state.



Updated: July 2021

^v <https://www.epilepsy.com/about-us/advocacy/advocacy-priorities/public-health-awareness-education/seizure-safe-schools>