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House Bill 226: Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: Support

Hearing: Ways and Means 2/3/2022

I am in support of HB226 to allow cameras in self contained special education classrooms in Maryland. Surveillance cameras have become the cornerstone of security everywhere in today's world and schools are no exception. There are surveillance cameras in schools as a safety and security measure and a deterrent to crimes in our school hallways, front offices, gymnasiums, cafeterias and exteriors. Video surveillance in self contained special education classrooms will add a layer of protection for nonverbal students who can not come home and tell their parents about what happened to them in school as these specialized classrooms support many students who can not rely on speech alone to be heard and understood.

Camera surveillance footage would only be viewed when a concern of abuse, harm or neglect is alleged. The footage would be unmonitored and not viewed unless an incident is reported and the videos will not be used to monitor teacher pedagogy or student behavior and placement. Schools are also public spaces and individuals who work in public spaces have a low expectation of privacy. We send our kids to school to be educated in a safe environment and this does not always happen.

Four states (WV,TX,GA,LA) already have cameras in self-contained classrooms and we are hoping that you will support HB226 to ensure vulnerable students and teachers have a third eye to minimize harm to students and protect teachers from a false allegation. A third eye in these classrooms is necessary to determine what happened if a child comes home with bruises, bumps or injuries. We need cameras to be their voices!

Sincerely,


Chris Johnson