



House Bill 226

Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classroom – Use of Video Recording Devices

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

Date: February 3, 2022

To: Ways and Means Committee

From: Brianna January

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** HB 226. While well-intentioned, this bill would place a costly mandate on school systems and county governments to carry out new state policy and install video recording devices in every self-contained special education classroom in every public school.

HB 226 would impose a costly, burdensome mandate – without accompanying State support – for school systems and county governments to install and maintain video recording devices in any self-contained classroom in which the majority of students are special education students. Under state law, counties would have no choice but to endure these costs for county boards of education. These costs would compete for limited local funds against school construction, public safety, roadway maintenance, and other essential public services. As counties undergo broad-based re-thinking of education priorities under the Kirwan Blueprint legislation, HB 226 would introduce a substantial new mandated cost fully outside the resources provided for in the Blueprint.

Ultimately, HB 226 is costly on multiple fronts. The Fiscal Note prepared by the Department of Fiscal Services for the 2021 version of the bill (HB 715) recognized direct costs, citing figures into the millions of dollars for each of the larger school systems. Another less clear, but still significant, concern is ongoing administrative costs to maintain the resulting footage and fully comply under Maryland’s Public Information Act, especially since this video footage will contain images of minors. Additionally, there is a cost associated with training staff and faculty in the purpose and use of these cameras, and proper redaction of footage prior to release, which would be a time-intensive process.

This bill is a potentially significant unfunded mandate for Boards of Education. Counties support avenues to create safe environments for all students, but strongly oppose the broadly mandated provisions of HB 226. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** HB 226 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.