



Autism Society

Baltimore-Chesapeake



Autism
Society
Maryland

Howard | Montgomery | Anne Arundel

Testimony on HB 1127

Autism Society of America,

Autism Society of Maryland & Autism Society of Baltimore- Chesapeake

Submitted to Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

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Dear Chairman Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and other members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of [HB 1127](#), a bill to increase water and swim safety for students in the state of Maryland.

I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of the Autism Society of America, the Autism Society of Maryland and Autism Society Baltimore-Chesapeake. The Autism Society of America is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots organization representing individuals on the Autism spectrum and their families. The Autism Society envisions a world where individuals and families living with Autism can maximize their quality of life, are treated with the highest level of dignity, and live in a society where their talents and skills are appreciated and valued. Along with our 70+ affiliates nationwide, we provide advocacy, education, information and referral, support, and community engagement opportunities at national, state, and local levels. Our Maryland affiliates include the Autism Society of Maryland, which works with families and autistic individuals in Montgomery, Howard, and Anne Arundel County, and the Autism Society of Baltimore-Chesapeake, which covers Baltimore City and County. These affiliates have served the state by offering information and referral services, educational workshops, social and support groups, and are led by Melissa Rosenberg and Thairen Greene.

As an organization that advocates for individuals with autism, we understand the profound importance of water safety in preventing accidents and fatalities. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 out of 36 9-year-olds are currently diagnosed with autism and drowning is one of the leading causes of death for children with autism, particularly among those who are non-verbal or have limited communication skills. This bill is an important step toward ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, are equipped with the life-saving skills and knowledge needed to stay safe around water.

Providing access to lessons, water safety education, and teaching caregivers and educators how to develop layers of protection to keep the Autism community safe is the best way to help reduce drowning related deaths in the Autism community. 91% of Autistic deaths under the age fourteen are due to drowning, subsequent to wandering. This underscores the need for not

only water safety skills but wandering prevention education in schools. About 50% of people with Autism have wandered or will wander during their lifetime. It is imperative that educators, caregivers, and individuals receive education and knowledge of how to safeguard loved ones or themselves from unimaginable tragedy.

This bill is an important step toward creating a safer, more inclusive educational environment for all students, particularly those with autism. It will help ensure that all public school students, regardless of their ability or background, have access to water safety education and swimming instruction. By providing children with autism the skills they need to stay safe around water, this legislation will not only save lives but will also promote inclusion, physical activity, and emotional well-being for this vulnerable population.

We strongly urge you to support this bill and thank you for your time and consideration. Together, we can make a lasting difference in the lives of children with autism and their families by ensuring they have the opportunity to learn these critical life-saving skills.