

JOHNNY RAY SALLING
Legislative District 6
Baltimore County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment Subcommittee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 18, 2026

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senator Brian J. Feldman
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

To the Chair, Vice Chair and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify in favor of Senate Bill 219. For the record, my name is Senator Johnny Ray Salling.

In 2019, we lost Bowen Levy, a special needs student who tragically choked while in the care of the Anne Arundel County Public School System. His death was a reminder of how quickly choking can turn deadly and that every second counts.

This bill will require every public school in Maryland to have an airway clearing device - a small, efficient tool that quickly removes a blockage from a child's throat during a choking emergency.

It will also require each County Board of Education—and Baltimore City—to establish a policy ensuring these devices are readily available in schools. Staff will be properly trained and protected if they respond in good faith during an emergency. Our state currently lacks consistent data on choking incidents in schools; this bill includes a reporting requirement to track those emergencies and improve response times in the future.

I would like to note that I have added amendments to this bill that will require the following:

- The Department of Education shall consult with the Department of Health shall adopt regulations that establish guidelines to ensure public schools have in attendance at all times employees, basic first aid training, including abdominal thrusts or heimlich maneuver, CPR, and stop the bleed training
- A ratio of one school employee on each floor of a school and
- one additional employee in attendance on each floor of a school building who is certified for every additional 20 students on the floor

Let's empower our teachers, nurses, and staff with the tools and confidence to act quickly when a child's life is on the line. Let's make Maryland a leader in student safety—not waiting for another tragedy but working to prevent one.

I respectfully ask for your favorable report of this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Johnny Ray Salling". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Senator Johnny Ray Salling