

SB0051 – Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms – Use of Video Recording Devices

Position: UNFAVORABLE (or Unfavorable unless amended)

Chair and members of the Committee:

I'm a parent-informed special education advocate. I'm urging an **UNFAVORABLE** vote on SB0051 as written because **it does not protect Marylanders—it protects the systems Maryland taxpayers fund**. It mandates cameras but does not create enforceable parent rights, meaningful public transparency, or real accountability.

This bill does not go far enough

SB0051 creates recordings while keeping them **confidential** and largely **inaccessible to families**—the very people responsible for protecting a child's educational rights. Districts already control the records, timelines, narratives, and data that families need to prove harm or denial of services. This bill adds video evidence, but leaves control in the hands of the school system.

The access structure centers law enforcement—not student rights or FAPE

The bill explicitly permits viewing by school administrators, SROs, CPS, and law enforcement. Parents' access is effectively delayed and conditioned—tied to determinations about “potential criminal conduct” and the conclusion of an investigation.

Most special education harm is not criminal. It is **failure to implement IEPs, unsafe practices, misuse of exclusion areas, and denial of FAPE**. SB0051 does not give parents timely, usable access to recordings for these common, non-criminal violations.

“Reporting” is not transparency

Annual reporting focused on the number of requests and the identity of the requester is not accountability. Taxpayers deserve transparency about how public dollars are spent and whether safeguards are working. If Maryland mandates cameras, Marylanders should see de-identified outcomes: system reliability, interruptions, incident categories, corrective actions, and compliance results—not secrecy.

Families will not knowingly place children in unsafe environments

Families of children with disabilities will not willingly place their children in settings with known accessibility, safety, or exclusion-area risks. If there are problems in these classrooms, the solution is to correct conditions—not to withhold evidence behind confidentiality rules that make accountability harder.

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If the Committee moves this bill, it must be amended

At minimum, SB0051 should be amended to require:

- **Timely parent access** to recordings involving their child for safety, IEP/FAPE, and exclusion-area concerns—not only after criminal processes conclude
- **Immediate preservation** upon parent request, with enforceable timelines
- **Independent oversight and audit logs** for interruptions, access, and retention
- **Meaningful public transparency reporting** (de-identified) including costs, system reliability, and corrective actions

Without these amendments, this bill becomes “we recorded it, but you can’t see it,” which increases institutional protection and makes it harder—not easier—for families to secure accountability.

Closing

Maryland can do better. If the State is going to mandate cameras in special education settings, it must also mandate parent access, independent oversight, and public transparency. SB0051 as written does not meet that standard.

Vote UNFAVORABLE—or hold the bill until these protections are added.

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryland Parent & Special Education Advocate