



State of Maryland
Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems

Wes W. Moore
Governor

Clay B. Stamp
Chairman EMS Board

Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director

February 12, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 219 – Public Schools – Airway Clearing Device Availability and Use – Policy (Bowen Levy Airway Clearing Device Act)

—LETTER OF OPPOSITION—

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

The Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) respectfully submits this letter in opposition to Senate Bill 219, which would, among other things, require each county board of education to establish a policy to obtain at least one airway clearing device per school and to authorize school nurses and other school personnel to use such a device on an individual experiencing a choking emergency.

MIEMSS is opposed to this legislation for the following reasons:

- According to the American Red Cross and American Heart Association, the most reliable, evidence-based methods for clearing an airway obstruction in a choking victim remain a combination of back blows and/or abdominal thrusts (the “Heimlich” maneuver).¹
- In a November 13, 2025, Safety Communication, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) noted that “anti-choking devices currently sold over-the-counter do not have FDA marketing authorization, meaning the FDA has not evaluated the safety and effectiveness of those devices,” adding that “consumers, parents, caregivers, and health care providers should be aware that using an unauthorized anti-choking device before established protocols could delay critical life-saving action.”²

MIEMSS, therefore, urges an unfavorable report on SB 219. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

Theodore R. Delbridge, MD, MPH
Executive Director

¹ American Red Cross, Adult/Child Choking Emergency Steps, <https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/resources/learn-first-aid/adult-child-choking>;

² <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/safety-communications/update-fda-encourages-public-follow-established-choking-rescue-protocols-fda-safety-communication#actions>.