

Date: April 1, 2026

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: **HB1182 Public and Nonpublic Schools - Student Elopement - Locative Devices**

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Sir Feldman and Vice Chair Kagan,

My name is Maddy Ciotola, and I am the parent of Lincoln, who is non-verbal and living with a neurogenetic disorder called Angelman Syndrome. I am writing to express strong support for **House Bill 1182**, which would authorize schools to coordinate the voluntary use of locative devices to help protect students who may be at risk of elopement.

Angelman Syndrome diagnosis means that my son will remain mostly non-verbal for the span of his life. This made the prospect of starting school this past fall very daunting and scary especially considering the bus and other transportation.

House Bill 1182 allows schools to **coordinate the voluntary use of locative devices for students who are at risk of elopement**, helping caregivers and school staff quickly locate a child if they leave a safe environment.

The bill also establishes **important privacy protections** to ensure information collected through these devices is handled appropriately.

### **Why This Bill Matters**

Students with certain disabilities may wander or elope without understanding danger. This behavior can occur suddenly and without warning.

Allowing schools to coordinate voluntary locative devices:

- Helps schools respond quickly when a student leaves a supervised area
- Supports caregivers who are concerned about their child's safety
- Provides schools with another tool to protect vulnerable students
- Encourages coordination between families and school personnel

This legislation recognizes that **student safety and caregiver peace of mind are deeply connected**.

Children who elope often lack an understanding of dangers such as traffic, bodies of water, or becoming lost. Tools that allow a child to be quickly located or identified can save critical time during an emergency, significantly reducing risk. For caregivers, the constant possibility of elopement creates ongoing anxiety. Situations such as a substitute bus driver letting a child off at the wrong stop, a momentarily distracted caregiver, or other unforeseen circumstances can all be mitigated using a simple monitoring device.

In our experience, we initially encountered resistance to using the device. However, after providing a thorough demonstration and discussing its purpose with the school administrator, we were fortunate that he recognized the clear benefits. Other schools, however, may maintain stricter policies or be less familiar with its advantages.

These devices offer additional benefits beyond safety: they can help deter bullying of students with special needs, provide reassurance to parents and caregivers, and alert school personnel or families when a child leaves designated safe zones.

Importantly, House Bill 1182 does not require the use of locative devices. Instead, it simply allows schools and families to coordinate their voluntary use when appropriate.

Legislation like House Bill 1182 helps create safer environments for students who may require additional protections due to disability, cognitive differences, or medical conditions.

By allowing schools and families to work together on safety planning, Maryland can better protect vulnerable students while respecting privacy and family choice.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 1182**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
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