

L. Kuespert favorable testimony HB1182.pdf

Uploaded by: lyndsey kuespert

Position: FAV

April 1, 2026

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

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

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Felden, Vice Chair Kagen, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lyndsey Kuespert, and I am paraeducator at Harford Academy in Harford County. I am also the parent of a 10-year-old child with autism and epilepsy. I am writing to express strong support for House Bill 1182, which would expand access to elopement response devices for individuals who are at risk of wandering. The school I work for is highly specialized and has around 130 students ranging from age 3 to 21, all of whom have varying levels of disability. Many of our students are prone to elopement, and protocols are in place to address such a situation. However, as a parent of a child with significant needs due to autism and epilepsy, handling such an emergency is more difficult as I am usually alone with her. This means that I would have no one besides first responders, and possibly neighbors or strangers depending on where we are at the time, to assist in locating her. Drowning is not only a leading cause in children with autism, but also children with epilepsy, and we live in the Chesapeake Bay estuary. Locating a child like mine as quickly as possible is a matter of life and death, what starts as a scary moment can become a life changing tragedy within minutes. House Bill 1182 helps ensure that individuals at risk of elopement have access to critical safety technology. These devices may include wearable safety technology or monitoring systems that help caregivers and responders locate a missing individual quickly during an emergency. Elopement can occur suddenly and without warning. Individuals who wander may not understand dangers such as traffic, bodies of water, extreme weather, or getting lost. My daughter is cognitively a very young toddler, but looks like a 12-year-old. Not only will she not understand danger, but at first glance someone in passing may not recognize that she is in danger. Providing access to elopement response devices:

- Helps caregivers locate a loved one quickly if they go missing
- Improves emergency response times during search situations
- Reduces risks of injury or fatality
- Provides peace of mind for families caring for vulnerable individual.

Prevention is the first line of defense for a child who elopes, the same way the skin is our first line of defense against disease. However, you don't rely solely on your skin's ability

to prevent disease, and in the same way, caregivers cannot solely rely on prevention. My entire life, including the way I arrange my home, my schedule, and my free time, my job, everything I do revolves around my daughter's care. This world is not built for her, so my job as her parent is to adapt as much as I can of the world to fit her needs and adapt her to fit where the world can't bend. Caregiving doesn't end when our kids turn 18, the responsibility for her safety and care will never transfer to her as it does with typical children as they get older. As I myself get older, and she does as well, getting bigger and stronger, my ability to structure my home around her safety will decrease. I used to be able to lock the door and her be safe, then a baby gate, then a taller baby gate screwed into the wall and another bolted into her window frame, then alarms, now its all of those things plus covers on the door knobs that as of now she hasn't figured out how to use. But she will, she always does. That will lead to another terrifying close call, a day of research and purchasing the next stage of locks and puzzles to open the doors. Being in public is its own beast to tackle, she has a stroller that's way too small and uncomfortable. That is currently our only option because the strollers cost 3-4 thousand dollars from a medical supply company. If she won't sit in the small stroller, then she walks, and I have to be hypervigilant, ready to run after her at moment's notice, cautious of everyone around us so that she doesn't freak someone out by bumping into them. She also has no concept of stranger danger and could easily be coerced to follow someone or be led away by the hand. House Bill 1182 recognizes that preventative safety tools can save lives. By improving access to elopement response technology, Maryland can better support individuals with disabilities, older adults with cognitive impairments, and the caregivers who work tirelessly to keep them safe. Raising a child with significant needs and disabilities is the loneliest thing I have ever done. Finding help, resources, respite, even equipment that could make this feel manageable is a full-time job in and of itself while many of us are working full-time and caregiving full-time already. Passing this bill would communicate to us as parents that our state does see our kids as human beings deserving of the same care and respect that all other citizens of the state deserve. 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,

Lyndsey Kuespert

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HB1182 Favorable Template - Maddy C.pdf

Uploaded by: Madelyn Ciotola

Position: FAV

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,
Maddy Ciotola
Mother of Lincoln, Angelman Syndrome Warrior
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R A Lawson HB1182 Senate Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Reginald A. Lawson

Position: FAV

April 1, 2026 – HB 1182 Testimony – Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

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

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Reginald A. Lawson, writing to you, as a former caregiver, 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.

I am a facilitator of a monthly men's caregivers support group. We discuss real-world realities of the risks of elopement during our watch, surrogate caregiving periods, daycare visits, shopping, and even family outings. I emphasize **the passing of time is the greatest risk multiplier** for those that elope suffering with cognitive disabilities. Locating them quickly is paramount!!!

During my caregiving journey with my mother, I employed several options, such as medical alert bracelets and dementia seatbelt covers to inform anyone, who found my mother, of her condition and whom to call. However, those approaches did not address elopement's time-sensitive threats.

My mother favored comfortable sneakers, so I purchased GPS-infused sneakers. This afforded all of us (the family, paid caregivers, daycare staff, search personnel) the ability to identify her attempts (fencing) and actual elopement area, thereby reducing time to find her and lessening everyone's (including search team) exposure to danger. The psychological relief of knowing you can find them as quick as possible is invaluable.

House Bill 1182 allows schools to **coordinate the voluntary use of locative devices for students who are at risk of elopement**, helping caregivers, school staff and other rescue personnel to quickly locate a child if they leave a safe environment. The bill equally establishes **important privacy protections** to ensure information collected through these devices is handled appropriately.

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,



Reginald A. Lawson
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Lailas Gift HB1182_Senate EEE.pdf

Uploaded by: Shari Bailey

Position: FAV



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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 Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shari Bailey. I am the Founder of Laila's Gift, a Maryland nonprofit that supports families of individuals with non-apparent disabilities and advocates for policies that improve safety and quality of life for caregivers and those they support. Most importantly, I am the mother of my daughter, Laila, who is nonverbal, autistic, and lives with a rare genetic syndrome.

Laila is what professionals refer to as an eloper. Like many children with autism and related conditions, she is at risk of leaving a safe environment without understanding danger or the ability to call for help. This risk is not hypothetical for our family. It is formally documented in her Individualized Education Program, where elopement is identified as a known safety concern.

For families like mine, elopement is not a theoretical issue. It is a daily reality. Many children with autism and developmental disabilities are drawn toward water, roads, or unfamiliar places, often without the ability to communicate their needs or recognize danger. For us, safety planning is not optional. It is essential.

Every day, we balance the desire to give our children independence with the responsibility to keep them safe. When a child elopes, every second matters.

HB1182 offers a practical, compassionate solution. It creates a pathway for families and schools to voluntarily incorporate locative technology into a student's IEP when appropriate. It does not mandate technology. Instead, it enables coordination.

That coordination is critical.

Through my work with Laila's Gift, I have spoken with families across Maryland who face this fear every day. One mother shared a story that illustrates both the risk and the opportunity before us.



Her nonverbal son eloped from school. When staff realized he was missing, panic set in. The response was a walkie-talkie search, with staff trying to locate him as quickly as possible. A paraeducator ultimately found him four blocks away and ran across a busy intersection to bring him to safety. Thankfully, he was found. But it took nearly fifteen minutes.

After that experience, the mother made the difficult decision to remove her child from school.

What makes this even more significant is that her son was already wearing a locator device as part of his safety plan. However, there was no clear framework for the school to coordinate with her or use that information. If there had been, those fifteen minutes could likely have been reduced to just a couple of minutes. In situations like this, minutes matter. Seconds matter.

HB1182 addresses this gap by allowing locative devices to be included in a student's IEP as part of a coordinated safety plan. This supports:

- Clear communication between families and school staff
- Defined protocols in the event of elopement
- Faster response times when a child goes missing
- A shared understanding of how safety tools can be used appropriately

This bill is about enabling partnership. It gives families and schools the ability to work together using tools that may already be in place to protect a child.

Elopement is not rare within the disability community. It is a frequent and deeply frightening reality. Policies like HB1182 help ensure that children with disabilities can safely participate in school environments while maintaining safeguards that protect their well-being.

When caregivers and schools are better aligned, children are safer, families have greater peace of mind, and communities are better prepared to respond.

As a mother, an advocate, and the founder of an organization dedicated to protecting vulnerable individuals, I respectfully urge the Committee to **issue a favorable report on HB1182.**

This legislation recognizes a simple but critical truth: when a vulnerable child goes missing, every moment matters. Creating a pathway for coordination around voluntary safety tools can help ensure that children like Laila are found quickly and returned safely.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,



Shari Bailey
Founder, CEO, Caregiver
Laila's Gift

HB 1182_ Public and Nonpublic Schools - Student E

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: FAV

HB 1182: Public and Nonpublic Schools - Student Elopement - Locative Devices:
Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill.

Dear Education, Energy & the Environment Committee:

I am writing to respectfully **support HB 1182**, concerning *Public and Nonpublic Schools – Student Elopement – Locative Devices*.

Student elopement—when a child leaves a supervised, safe environment without notice—poses a serious safety risk, particularly for students with disabilities such as autism or other developmental conditions. In some cases, **elopement can lead to life-threatening situations involving traffic, bodies of water, or other environmental hazards. Schools must be equipped with practical tools to help protect vulnerable students.**

HB 1182 provides a structured framework for the appropriate use of locative devices when requested by parents or guardians and when deemed necessary for student safety. **Allowing families and schools to work collaboratively to implement safeguards can provide peace of mind while ensuring that students remain protected during the school day.**

Importantly, the use of such devices should be guided by clear policies, parental consent, and privacy protections. When implemented responsibly, locative technology can serve as an additional layer of safety—not as a disciplinary measure, but as a proactive step to prevent emergencies.

Students who are at risk of elopement deserve thoughtful, individualized safety planning. This legislation recognizes the real concerns families face and offers a reasonable solution that prioritizes student welfare.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support HB 1182**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

BILL_ HB1182 (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Alicia Baines

Position: FWA

House Bill 1182 – Public and Nonpublic Schools – Student Elopement – Locative Devices

House Bill 1182 – Public and Nonpublic Schools – Student Elopement – Locative Devices

Submitted by: Alicia Renee
Special Education Advocate | Maryland Constituent

Position: Favorable with Amendments

House Bill 1182 addresses a critical and well-documented issue: student wandering and elopement, particularly among students with disabilities. The bill's intent—to improve safety and provide structured responses to elopement behavior—is necessary and appropriate.

As a Maryland advocate working directly with families navigating failures in IEP implementation and student safety planning, I support the recognition of elopement as a serious risk. However, in its current form, the bill relies heavily on discretion and optional implementation, without ensuring consistent protections, accountability, or alignment with federal special education law.

If the intent of this bill is to improve safety outcomes, it must establish enforceable standards and ensure that interventions are both equitable and effective.

Key Concerns and Required Amendments

1. Discretion Without Minimum Standards

The bill allows schools broad discretion in developing policies and implementing locative device use. This will result in inconsistent practices across districts and schools.

Amendment: Establish minimum statewide standards for elopement prevention, supervision, response protocols, and documentation.

2. Lack of Required Behavioral Assessment and Intervention

The bill references IEPs and behavior plans but does not require a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) or evidence-based intervention when elopement occurs.

Amendment: Require FBAs and data-driven Behavior Intervention Plans for any student with documented elopement or wandering behavior.

3. Equity Gap in Access to Safety Supports

The bill explicitly states that schools are not required to provide or manage locative devices.

This creates inequitable access, placing the burden on families to fund safety measures.

House Bill 1182 – Public and Nonpublic Schools – Student Elopement – Locative Devices

Amendment: Clarify that when a locative device is determined necessary through the IEP process, it must be considered under assistive technology or related services, consistent with FAPE requirements.

4. Insufficient Real-Time Safety Requirements

The bill requires same-day parent notification following an elopement incident.

This is insufficient to ensure student safety during active incidents.

Amendment: Require immediate notification during elopement events, defined response protocols, and staff training requirements.

5. No Required Data Tracking or System-Level Learning

While the bill includes privacy protections, it does not require tracking or analysis of elopement incidents.

Amendment: Require incident tracking, integration of data into IEP decision-making, and reporting of trends to support system-level improvement.

6. No Enforcement or Accountability Mechanism

The bill requires policies but does not establish consequences for failure to implement or follow them.

Amendment: Establish oversight, corrective action requirements, and alignment with MSDE monitoring systems to ensure compliance.

House Bill 1182 acknowledges a serious safety issue, but without enforceable standards, aligned interventions, and accountability mechanisms, it risks reinforcing inconsistent practices that leave vulnerable students unprotected.

Maryland must ensure that student safety is not discretionary.

I respectfully urge a favorable report with amendments to ensure this bill delivers consistent, equitable, and effective protections for all students.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Renee

Maryland Constituent & Special Education Advocate

HB 1182 xover - Public and Nonpublic Schools - Stu

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: FWA



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
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BILL: HB 1182
TITLE: Public and Nonpublic Schools - Student Elopement - Locative Devices
DATE: April 1, 2026
POSITION: Favorable with Amendments
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four Maryland local school superintendents, **supports** HB 1182 **with amendments**.

This bill authorizes a school to coordinate a student's voluntary use of a locative device and monitor the student's location only if (1) the student has a documented history of wandering or elopement in the student's individualized education program (IEP); (2) the student's parent or guardian provides informed consent; and (3) the locative device cannot make audio or video recordings of other students or school personnel or allows recording capabilities to be turned off when a student is in an educational setting. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must issue advisory guidance to schools on incorporating a student's use of a locative device and related privacy protections, as specified.

(https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2026RS/fnotes/bil_0002/hb1182.pdf)

PSSAM supports the intent of this legislation, which authorizes schools to coordinate the voluntary use of locative devices for students with a documented history of wandering or elopement, with appropriate parental consent and privacy protections.

These devices can be powerful and effective tools to enhance student safety when used appropriately and collaboratively among families, students, and schools. We appreciate the bill's focus on voluntary use, individualized decision-making through the IEP process, and safeguards to ensure that devices do not record audio or video in educational settings.

To ensure the legislation is both workable and aligned with its intent, we respectfully request the following clarifications:

1. Clarify the permissive nature of school system policies

As we understand it, the bill is intended to be authorizing and permissive. However, the current language requires that if a school system adopts a policy, it must include specific elements, including that the school has access to monitoring software. Many school systems already allow these personal devices with parental consent but do not require staff to actively monitor the devices or software.

If this provision becomes the operational “floor” for local policies, some school systems may choose not to allow these devices due to the practical challenges associated with continuous monitoring. *We believe this concern can be addressed by removing or clarifying the requirement that school systems must provide or actively use monitoring software.*

2. Clarify that costs remain a parental responsibility

The bill has been presented as a voluntary, parent-driven option, with families responsible for purchasing the device and any associated monitoring services. However, as currently drafted, the language could be interpreted to require school systems to purchase devices, install related infrastructure (such as hardware for doors or windows), and maintain subscriptions for monitoring services.

We respectfully request an amendment clarifying that participation remains voluntary and that any costs associated with the device and its operation are the responsibility of the parent or guardian, unless otherwise determined through the IEP process.

3. Provide liability protections for schools and staff

If the above clarifications are made, we further request explicit language that protects school systems, schools, and staff from liability related to the performance or malfunction of devices, software, or monitoring systems. This would not affect existing responsibilities for in-person student supervision, but would ensure that schools are not held liable for technology failures or monitoring-related issues beyond their control.

With these clarifications, we believe this legislation can provide families with an important additional safety tool while remaining practical and sustainable for school systems to implement. Safeguards for students, families, and school staff are essential to ensuring this technology is used effectively and responsibly.

PSSAM respectfully requests a **favorable report with amendments**.