

HB1545

Position: Support

Rania Dima
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Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Predators take advantage of opportunities when and where they arise. When those predators are responsible for our children, that place is often our classrooms. As a tween, I stumbled upon a trusted adult abusing a minor in a church classroom. In high school, after class, a teacher put his hands on me and made an inappropriate proposition. I was able to fend him off, but I knew it would be his word against mine.

As a mother of an autistic son who spent three years in a self-contained classroom, I often worried about the vulnerability that this learning environment created. My son is now many years past school age, but I still have a child in FCPS receiving special education services, and that worry continues to linger. As a student with an IEP, I frequently received special education services in isolated settings, but my disability was neither verbal nor developmental. How do we ensure that students like my son and his peers are protected? How do we give them a voice in the face of the unthinkable?

Video and audio recording, along with other safety measures, provide an extra layer of security and peace of mind. Many of us lock our front doors, set our alarm systems, and use security cameras—often reviewing the footage after an incident occurs. These layers work together to deter and detect crime. Protecting our most vulnerable children, especially those who cannot advocate for themselves, should be no different. Concerns about the potential misuse of surveillance should not outweigh the possibility of abuse of a child, and language in the bill acknowledges and mitigates these concerns.

In December 2025, the Frederick County Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee, of which I am a member, voted to support the use of classroom cameras, with necessary safeguards, in locations where special education services occur. While I am a community member, I am providing my written testimony as an individual to urge you to support HB1545.

Sincerely,
Rania Dima