

House Bill 1182

Public and Nonpublic Schools – Student Elopement – Locative Devices

Date: March 10, 2026

House Ways and Means Committee

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Madam Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Cody Stevens, and I am the President and CEO of The Anchor Initiative, Inc., a nonprofit dedicated to supporting individuals with disabilities and their families across Maryland's Eastern Shore. More importantly, I am the father of a young man named Luke, whose journey is the reason this legislation matters so deeply to me.

My son Luke was born with Polymicrogyria, a rare brain malformation that affects brain development. As a result, he also lives with Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome, one of the most severe forms of epilepsy. Luke has undergone two major brain surgeries, including a full right hemispherectomy, in order to reduce life-threatening seizures. Despite these challenges, Luke continues to fight every single day with remarkable strength and determination.

Because of Luke's complex medical and developmental needs, our family made the decision to homeschool him in order to ensure his safety and stability. However, as Luke has grown, he has expressed something that means the world to us as parents. He wants to meet new friends and experience being around other students again.

For Luke, the idea of being in a school environment was once unsettling and overwhelming. Now, it is something he is curious about and hopeful for. As parents, we want to support that growth and help him safely explore those opportunities.

However, one of the challenges we must always consider is elopement behavior.

Like many children with neurological and developmental disabilities, Luke has experienced moments where he has wandered from a safe environment without understanding the dangers around him. As parents, there have been moments where we have found him in places that were truly terrifying, or caught him just before he reached a situation that could have resulted in serious harm.

These experiences stay with you as a parent. They shape every decision you make about safety.

House Bill 1182 would authorize schools to coordinate the voluntary use of locative devices for students who have a documented history of wandering or elopement behavior, when consent is provided by a parent or guardian. These devices can help caregivers and school staff quickly

locate a child during an elopement incident, allowing them to respond faster in situations where time is critical.

Importantly, this bill also establishes strong privacy and data protections, limiting who can access location information and ensuring the data is used only to respond to wandering or elopement incidents.

For families like mine, legislation like this represents more than a policy change, it represents an exciting possibility.

Tools like locative devices can provide an additional layer of protection that may allow families to feel more confident in allowing their children to participate in environments that help them grow socially and emotionally.

For Luke, that could mean the chance to safely explore being part of a school community, meeting new friends, and experiencing opportunities that every child deserves.

It is also important to emphasize that House Bill 1182 is voluntary. The bill does not require schools, families, or students to use locative devices. Instead, it simply provides a pathway for schools and families to coordinate their use when it is appropriate for a child's safety plan.

Parents of children with complex disabilities already navigate overwhelming medical, educational, and safety challenges. When policies recognize those realities and provide tools that help keep our children safe, they make a meaningful difference.

Children like Luke deserve every opportunity to live safely and fully in their communities. House Bill 1182 provides a thoughtful and balanced approach that supports student safety 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, consideration, and commitment to protecting Maryland's most vulnerable students.

Sincerely,

Cody Stevens
President & CEO
The Anchor Initiative, Inc.
Eastern Shore, Maryland

Email: Cody@anchorinitiative.org
Phone: (410)-829-4696