

Good Afternoon,

Dear Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am Jimara Kocik, I am a parent of a child who receives special education services in a Maryland Public School. He is a van passenger for non-public schools. I am writing my testimony with my strong support of Bill HB0530, establishing the Task Force on Proactive Review of Audio and Video Recordings on Special Education Buses.

Why is this important? Because previous incidents at the school system involved students being assaulted and neglected by staff from the school's transportation contractor. My son is autistic, non-verbal, and not aware of how to defend himself or explain to me any bad behavior or conduct. As a parent, I entrust my child's safety each day to systems that operate largely outside my direct view. For families of students with disabilities, school transportation is not simply a logistical service; it must be held to the highest standards of care, accountability, and transparency. Audio and video recording systems on special education buses exist to protect students, staff, and drivers. However, when recordings are only reviewed reactively After a complaint or incident, opportunities to prevent harm are lost.

Forming a task force to include all stakeholders to study best practices, balance privacy considerations, and develop responsible recommendations that work for school systems, transportation providers, and families alike are crucial. HB0530 addresses this critical gap by establishing a task force to examine proactive and systematic review practices. Proactive review shifts the focus from responding to harm to preventing it. Regular and structured review of recordings can identify concerning patterns early, support better training for staff, and reinforce a culture of safety and professionalism. For vulnerable students who may be unable to self advocate or clearly communicate mistreatment, proactive oversight is especially essential.

As the parent of a child with special needs, I believe Maryland has a responsibility to lead with foresight rather than reaction. HB0530 represents a meaningful step toward ensuring that safeguards already in place are used effectively to protect those who need them most. The length of the ride for those students has been increasing every year, which makes it highly possible for incidents to happen.

I respectfully urge the Ways and Means Committee to vote yes on House Bill 0530 and to advance this important legislation. Thank you for your time, your service, and your continued commitment to the wellbeing of Maryland's students and families.

Jimara Kocik  
Mom, wife, caregiver

Autism Society of Maryland  
Board Member

