

Testimony in Support of HB 1000
Abbey Rianhard, HCPSS Special Educator

Chairperson, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Abbey Rianhard, and I am currently a third-year special educator working in a 1:1 regional program for elementary-aged students with Autism. I respectfully request a **favorable** report of HB1000.

Elopement is an emotional and devastating emergency that, for parents and teachers of children with Autism, is far too familiar. In an instant, a child is gone. Immediately, the fear hits. Is the student safe? Are they injured? Are they somewhere we can reach them? For staff and parents who know and love that child, it is an incredibly helpless feeling that stays far after the crisis ends.

In my role, I have had direct experience with students that elope. We do what we are trained to do: follow protocols, coordinate with administrators, and call for support. Even with those requirements and plans in place, the truth is that **some students simply move faster than any adult can react**. This is especially true when these behaviors are caused by panic, sensory overload, or a general need to escape. **In just my three years as a special educator, there have been numerous times where a student has exited the school building and ran.**

Perhaps the most frightening pattern in my experience is that students who elope are often drawn to water. Ponds, streams, drainage areas—places most parents and teachers do not notice in daily life—can become a high-risk destination in an emergency. To many children with Autism, water can be visually appealing, calming, or merely an area that feels familiar. But, in reality, it can turn an elopement into devastation, within minutes.

That is why HB 1000 matters. This bill requires school mapping data produced with program funding to include **site-specific labeling for the 1-mile radius surrounding the school grounds, including bodies of water**. This is a practical tool that can save time when it matters most. When elopement occurs, police officers may be dispatched and parents may arrive on scene in panic. Everyone is caught trying to answer the same, time-pressing question: *Where is the child likely to go next?* **Having clearly labeled water features means responders can immediately identify the highest-risk areas and prioritize them.** It helps schools direct law enforcement quickly and helps parents understand where danger may be without having to rely on guess-work or memory exercise.

This bill is not necessary because educators, like myself, are unprepared. This bill is necessary **because elopement is unpredictable, and when water is nearby, the situation could quickly become life-threatening**. HB 1000 is simple, targeted, and serves as a **common-sense step to give teachers, administrators, police, and parents more information to protect children.**

For the students I teach and love, and the families who trust me with their children every day, **I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1000.**

-Abbey Rianhard