

Date: March 10, 2026

Ways and Means Committee

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

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Madam Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mackenzie, and I am the parent of two medically and developmentally complex children: Adelaide, 12, who lives with SCN8A Epilepsy and multiple comorbidities, and my 6-year-old neurodivergent son, Miller. 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.

Both of my children face unique safety challenges. Adelaide's medical needs and Miller's difficulty following directions mean that even a brief moment of distraction can create serious risk. Like many families, we live with constant anxiety about these situations. This bill would give schools and families an important tool to help keep children safe while respecting privacy and choice.

House Bill 1182 allows schools to coordinate the voluntary use of locative devices for students at risk of elopement, helping staff and caregivers locate a child

quickly if they leave a supervised area. It also establishes privacy protections to ensure information is handled appropriately.

Students with certain disabilities may wander or elope without understanding danger, sometimes suddenly and without warning.

Allowing schools to coordinate voluntary locative devices:

- Helps schools respond quickly when a student leaves a supervised area
- Supports caregivers concerned about their child's safety
- Provides schools with another tool to protect vulnerable students
- Encourages coordination between families and school personnel

Children who elope often do not understand dangers such as traffic, water, or getting lost. Tools that help locate or identify a child quickly can save critical time. Locative devices provide an extra layer of protection and reassurance. For families like mine, knowing a school can coordinate safety plans helps both my daughter, who has complex medical needs, and my son, who may struggle to follow directions on a difficult day.

Schools want to keep every student safe but may not always have the tools to respond when a child leaves a classroom or school grounds. Locative devices help staff act quickly.

House Bill 1182 does not require the use of locative devices. 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 families and schools to coordinate, Maryland can better protect vulnerable students while respecting privacy and 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,

Mackenzie Wardrope

2941 Lomond Pl

Abingdon, MD

21009

MackenzieWardrope@gmail.com

(443)356-7896