

*Written Testimony of Julie Blum*

*March 3, 2020*

*SB549*

*Support – Brynleigh’s Act*

Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Committee:

My name is Julie Blum and I’m the mother of two daughters who attend Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, including my 21 year old daughter, Hannah Linsin, who suffers from autism and epilepsy due to a rare genetic disorder known as Tuberous Sclerosis Complex. I submit my testimony today to ask for your support of the Maryland Seizure Safe School Act, or Brynleigh’s Act, SB549/HB675, sponsored by Senator Young in the Senate and Representative Kerr in the House. This state legislation would ensure all school personnel, including nurses, teachers, and volunteers, are not only prepared but can recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to students experiencing seizures.

My daughter Hannah was diagnosed with epilepsy at two months of age. She has suffered a range of very mild to serious generalized tonic clonic seizures for most of her life and has had hundreds of seizures during her time in the Montgomery County Public School system. It has been a huge sense of relief for me that some of the nurses working in some of the schools Hannah has attended were trained in seizure recognition and response. However, I know that this is not the case across the state of Maryland and it has not always been the case for school staff who worked more directly with my daughter.

Approximately 1 in 26 people will develop epilepsy in their lifetime, 1 in 10 people will have a single seizure in their lifetime, and approximately 7900 Maryland children currently have an active epilepsy diagnosis, but there is only one nurse per 913 students. It is of vital importance that school staff know how to recognize and respond to a seizure should one occur in their classroom, school bus, or specialized area. Quick response to a seizure cannot wait for a nurse to arrive. It is not enough for school nurses to be the only ones with that training. Many students will have their first seizure while in school, so this is not just a matter of following a plan that is already in place. Some will have seizures in front of their classmates; when personnel are able to respond calmly and knowledgeably it makes the experience safer and less scary for everyone.

The Brynleigh Act will ensure that all school personnel have some familiarity with seizure recognition, and in doing so, will make all our children safer in their school environment. Five other states have passed similar bills, and many other states will follow. We hope that Maryland will, as always, lead by example. On behalf of my daughter, students across the state who have seizure disorders, and their parents, I ask you to please support “Brynleigh’s Act” and vote yes to SB549. Please help make Maryland schools seizure safe!

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Julie Blum

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