

March 3, 2020

SB0549 – SUPPORT-Brynleigh’s Act

To the Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

My family are your constituents, and we are writing in support of the Maryland Seizure Safe School Act, Brynleigh’s Act, or SB 549, 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 child, June Nunley, was diagnosed with epilepsy when she was three months old. She is now eight years old and has suffered from debilitating seizures all of her life. She is in the second grade at Carrolltowne Elementary School in Eldersburg. As you can imagine, sending my medically fragile child to school every day is a very scary and stressful experience. She has had many seizures at school over the years and it is only through the help of trusted teachers and aids, who took the time to learn from me how best to help June, that we are able to get through these difficult, even life threatening, situations. Having trained and experienced individuals to help June through her seizures is literally essential to her survival.

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 knowledgably it makes the experience safer and less scary for everyone.

Brynleigh’s Act (SB 549) 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. Please support this legislation, for my family and others like us.

Sincerely,

Kristy Nunley

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