

March 3, 2020

Support-SB0549-Brynleigh's Act

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

I am writing in support of the Maryland Seizure Safe School Act, or Brynleigh's Act (SB549), sponsored by Senator Young in the Senate. This state legislation would ensure all school personnel, including nurses, teachers, and volunteers, are not only prepared but can also recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to students experiencing seizures.

I am a Kindergarten teacher in Frederick County, MD and my student, Brynleigh, was diagnosed with epilepsy prior to beginning school in the public-school system. In my seven years of teaching before having Brynleigh, I never received any training on seizure procedures or protocol. Fortunately, Brynleigh's family was able to bring in the Epilepsy Foundation to provide training to myself and Brynleigh's other teachers and aides at the beginning of this school year. Without their prompt advocacy for their child, the educators that they trust their daughter with all day would not have appropriate training or protocols in place to ensure Brynleigh's safety in the event of a seizure at school.

During our training from the Epilepsy Foundation, I learned that 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 7,900 Maryland children currently have an active epilepsy diagnosis. With the probability of experiencing a student or coworker having a seizure so high, it is alarming that there is only one nurse per 913 students in the public school. 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. A quick response to a seizure cannot wait for a nurse to arrive and it is not enough for school nurses to be the only ones with the 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 students may have seizures in front of their classmates, so when personnel are able to respond calmly and knowledgeably it makes the experience safer and less scary for everyone involved.

Brynleigh's Act (SB549 and HB675) will ensure that all school personnel have some familiarity with seizure recognition, and in doing so, will make all children safer in their school environment. Five other states have passed similar bills, and many other states will follow. We hope that Maryland will also lead by example. I appreciate your support for this legislation as it directly affects my student, Brynleigh, this year and many students to come in the future.

Sincerely,

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