



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

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House Ways and Means Committee

February 10, 2021

HB 715: Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms – Use of Video Recording Devices

Position: Letter of Information

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) works to advance the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all facets of community life. This includes children with disabilities learning alongside their peers without disabilities. Maryland educates more than 100,000 students with disabilities, in a variety of settings, with a variety of services and supports.

This bill would require the installation of at least one video recording device in every self-contained special education classroom upon parent request.

The DD Council is not taking a position about whether this bill is warranted, but is rather seeking to inform the committee about the reality of video cameras in this type of special education setting. There are many factors to be considered as outlined by the Education Advocacy Coalition. There are also many questions:

- Are video recording devices a wise use of limited resources?
- Is anyone made safer in the presence of a camera?
- Does the use of video cameras promote a false sense of security?
- Will this lead to further segregation of students with developmental disabilities from their peers without disabilities?

TASH, a well-respected national non-profit group who advocate for the inclusion of all students in the general education classroom, has written extensively on this subject. Their position paper, [Camera Surveillance in Self-Contained Classrooms](#), provides a thorough examination of the issues considered by this bill:

- **Installing video cameras only in special education classrooms may create or strengthen a bias toward restrictive settings.** The reliance on more restrictive settings for safety contradicts the research on inclusive practice. Students with complex support needs can learn—and often learn as much, if not more—in general education settings.
- **Video camera surveillance may promote a false sense of security rather than safety.** Video evidence can be used to document abuse, but unless video is monitored in real-time, it is unlikely that camera surveillance will prevent abuse from happening. Using video camera surveillance as “evidence” of harmful staff behavior can be unreliable and/or easy to circumvent.
- Installing video cameras only in special education classrooms presents the risk that students with disabilities themselves may become the targets of surveillance.
- **Purchasing, installing, and maintaining video cameras is costly and uses scarce educational resources.**
- Relying on video cameras in special education classrooms does not build trust with either students or teachers.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, RLondon@md-council.org

217 E. Redwood Street, Suite 1300 • Baltimore, MD 21202 • 410.767.3670 • md-council.org

Kalani Brown, *Chairperson* • Rachel London, Esq., *Executive Director*