



# HOWARD COUNTY AUTISM SOCIETY

February 5, 2021

To: MD State House Ways and Means Committee

CC: MD State Legislature – Howard County Delegates  
MD State Legislature – Howard County Senators

From: Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) Education Advocacy Committee

Subject: HCAS Support of HB0715/SB0665 – Use of Video Recording Devices in Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

On behalf of the Howard County Autism Society (HCAS) and specifically its Education Advocacy Committee, I am writing to you today to express our strong support for HB0715 – Use of Video Recording Devices in Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms – submitted by Delegate Guyton.

We are reiterating our support for this effort, as we sent testimony to similar legislation put forth last year. Although we were disappointed that bill did not move forward, we are grateful to Delegate Guyton and Senator Peters for moving forward again this year in support of our most vulnerable residents.

The number of stories continue to grow each year of camera footage capturing abuse of children in our schools. Yet, for every one of these instances, there are many more reported or suspected cases of abuse that could be confirmed or refuted if there was a systematic way to capture video evidence in the matter. Several other states, including our neighbor, West Virginia, have heeded the message and implemented similar legislation in an effort to protect our students.

Children in Special Education classrooms are especially vulnerable to abuse because they often lack the ability to fully communicate any concerns adequately, creating the potential for egregious and continuing victimization. This bill is designed to provide recordings in our self-contained special education classrooms where these children may be isolated with limited staff and students, and has the potential to significantly reduce abuse, neglect, bullying, harassment or other behaviors/violations against our children who may not be able to fully advocate for their own safety and well-being. We must do better to protect this vulnerable

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## Howard County Autism Society

population of students and continue to provide quality instruction in a safe environment conducive to learning. Although a bit more limited than last year, this bill still provides a much-needed step towards that end.

We also believe that this bill as written addresses any potential concerns about the use of the cameras for monitoring teachers and it sets forth clear guidelines for viewing the recordings. In our opinion, this balanced bill provides much needed protections to our most vulnerable children, and does not endanger the privacy of the children or staff. To that end, we recommend that implementation of this important protection be done with sufficient planning to provide consistency across the state. It is imperative that the school systems, staff, and parents can be confident that this key initiative is installed with rigor and efficacy and with proper safeguards.

Thank you in advance for your strong consideration in supporting this bill for the protection of our community. We must make this a reality for the benefit of our school staff, our families, and, most importantly, our children that may not be able to advocate or protect themselves.

We once again would like to thank Ms. Lori Scott for her work in advocating for this bill, and Delegate Guyton for sponsoring this bill on the floor. Your efforts on behalf of our community are very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,



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Andrew Stettner  
Chair, Education Advocacy Cmte  
Howard County Autism Society



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Melissa Rosenberg  
Executive Director  
Howard County Autism Society



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Patrick Boxall  
President, Board of Directors  
Howard County Autism Society