



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
February 16, 2022**

**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

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**SB0577: UNFAVORABLE  
Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classroom – Use of Video  
Recording Devices**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) opposes **SB0577 Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classroom – Use of Video Recording Devices.**

In previous years this bill has been introduced, the sponsor panel has indicated the primary purpose of the bill is to give parents of special education students who cannot always report injuries, abuse, etc. an avenue to understand and resolve incidents in the classroom. The Board supports this intent. Not only could cameras provide a window for parents and guardians to feel at ease, but similarly where issues of mistrust fall on the school system cameras, may provide an avenue to defend allegations. In Howard County, delivery of special education services relies on quality programs and instruction, as well as trust and transparency to meet the unique needs of every student with a disability.

The move to place cameras in classrooms however, regardless of the type of classroom, is a potentially slippery slope that requires careful consideration at the local level with input from all stakeholders. The safety of every student is paramount to the Howard County Public School System. To date, cameras are used for security purposes in common areas such as hallways, cafeterias, and building exteriors as well as on school buses.

HB0226 as written has logistical and financial implications for local school systems. Initially, identification of locations where cameras are required could prove problematic, where regional program rooms and Academic Life Skills classrooms may be easily identified as those with regularly attending students receiving special education services, a percentage of time spent in these rooms to meet the 50% threshold will vary. If the focus is on monitoring the types of students in the definition under the bill – those classified primarily as certificate track and cannot rely on speech alone to be heard and understood – integration throughout the school is routine for special education students and thus cameras will not capture activities outside these rooms throughout the day. Rooms which may fit the definition found in the bill could also include spaces used by therapists and specialists, or by teachers during planning periods, which would be recorded at all times based on the requirements of the bill.

While costs for cameras and systems will vary based on the layout of each room as well as the current wiring/infrastructure of each building, staff estimates we can expect at a minimum \$2,600-\$3,000 per school for one camera to include wiring, installation, cameras and servers/storage equipment, plus \$1,500-\$2,000 per additional camera. Annual maintenance is estimated at \$23,000 plus replacement of obsolete technology over time. The volume of complaints that require review of video, including the need for schools to conceal the identity of others not involved in incidents, will have an impact on administrative time spent responding to inquiries about potential incidents captured on videos.

The sponsors of SB0577 have worked over the years to address the feedback on this bill, including the [positives and potential drawbacks brought forward by school system and disability communities](#), and their advocacy should be commended. However, for the above reasons, we urge a UNFAVORABLE report of SB0577 from this Committee.