



206 CAPITOL STREET  
SALANGO LAW

CHARLESTON, WV 25301  
304-342-0512  
SALANGOLAW.COM

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Dear Sir/Madam:

I write in support of Maryland Senate Bill 0577.

On October 4, 2018, Amber Pack suspected that her 6-year-old autistic, nonverbal daughter was being abused at school. She placed a recording device in her hair that morning and sent her to school. When her daughter came home, Amber listened to the recording which caught eight hours of horrific abuse by a teacher and two aides upon her daughter and several special needs children at Berkeley Heights Elementary School. "I'll punch you in the face I ought to back hand you right in the teeth" and "I'm going to pull your hair until you start crying", are just a few of the abhorrent things captured in one day of recording. It's heartbreaking to think that these children were being treated so cruelly and had no way to tell their parents. We knew something had to change to try and prevent this from happening in the future.

As a result, in 2019, West Virginia Senate Bill 632 was passed requiring video cameras in self-contained public special education classrooms. The cameras are used to review any reported or suspected abuse in a self-contained classroom.

It did not take long for the new law to catch other teachers and aides abusing special needs children. In 2021, teachers and aides at two more schools, Horace Mann Middle School and Holz Elementary, were caught physically and verbally abusing special needs students in their classrooms. Cameras captured 10 instances of abuse and mistreatment in one classroom at Horace Mann Middle School. Without the cameras, no one would have known, and those innocent children would have continued to endure physical and emotional abuse.

Sincerely,  
  
Ben Salango

This problem is not limited to West Virginia. This is a nationwide issue that has been ongoing for years. It's time to stand up and protect our most vulnerable.

Please vote yes to support Maryland House Bill 0577. We must be the voice for the voiceless.