



TESTIMONY OF COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT
Support - Senate Bill 577 - Public Schools - Self-Contained Special Education
Classroom - Use of Video Recording Devices

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 16, 2022

Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee, it is my pleasure to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 577 - Public Schools - Self-Contained Special Education Classroom - Use of Video Recording Devices. I would like to thank Senator Klausmeier for sponsoring this important legislation, and the Committee for providing the opportunity for my testimony to be heard.

Many special needs students in our state are non-verbal or find it difficult to communicate effectively. This means that if they are subject to any form of abuse or neglect, they are left unable to advocate for themselves. Senate Bill 577 is designed to provide a layer of protection to special education students by providing video evidence of any suspected wrongdoing. This holds individuals accountable and serves as a deterrent for improper behavior.

Special education students deserve the same access to a safe educational environment, and Senate Bill 577 would help protect some of our most vulnerable students by increasing accountability. For the reasons stated above, I respectfully request a favorable report for Senate Bill 577. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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Senate Bill 577 – Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: Support

Hearing: EHEA Committee

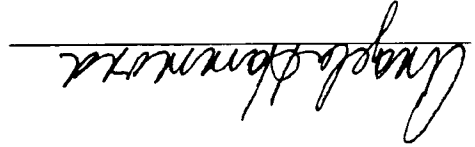
Name: Angela Hammond
Address: 4244 Rose Petal Ct
Ellicott City, Md 21043
Email: angelahammond@aol.com

I am in support of SB577 to allow cameras in self contained special education classrooms in Maryland. Surveillance cameras have become the cornerstone of security everywhere in today's world and schools are no exception. There are surveillance cameras in schools as a safety and security measure and a deterrent to crimes in our school hallways, front offices, gymnasiums, cafeterias and exteriors. Video surveillance in self contained special education classrooms will add a layer of protection for nonverbal students who can not come home and tell their parents about what happened to them in school as these specialized classrooms support many students who can not rely on speech alone to be heard and understood.

Camera surveillance footage would only be viewed when a concern of abuse, harm or neglect is alleged. The footage would be unmonitored and not viewed unless an incident is reported and the videos will not be used to monitor teacher pedagogy or student behavior and placement. Schools are also public spaces and individuals who work in public spaces have a low expectation of privacy. We send our kids to school to be educated in a safe environment and this does not always happen.

Four states (WV, TX, GA, LA) already have cameras in self-contained classrooms and we are hoping that you will support SB577 to ensure vulnerable students and teachers have a third eye to minimize harm to students and protect teachers from a false allegation. A third eye in these classrooms is necessary to determine what happened if a child comes home with bruises, bumps or injuries. We need cameras to be their voices!

Sincerely,



Senate Bill 577 -- Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: Support

Hearing: EHEA Committee

Name: Shelby Woods
Address: 4114 Kofu Circle
Blk Cott City, MD 21043
Email: shelbywoods@verizon.net

I am in support of SB577 to allow cameras in self contained special education classrooms in Maryland. Surveillance cameras have become the cornerstone of security everywhere in today's world and schools are no exception. There are surveillance cameras in schools as a safety and security measure and a deterrent to crimes in our school hallways, front offices, gymnasiums, cafeterias and exteriors. Video surveillance in self contained special education classrooms will add a layer of protection for nonverbal students who can not come home and tell their parents about what happened to them in school as these specialized classrooms support many students who can not rely on speech alone to be heard and understood.

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Sincerely,

Shelby Woods

Frank Kirkland

Vice President of Quality Supports

The Arc Baltimore

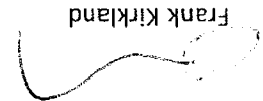
fkirkland@thearcbaltimore.org

HB226/SB557 Public Schools-Self-Contained special education classroom- Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: SUPPORT

HEARING: EHEA 2/16/22

I am writing in support of House Bill 226 that would establish the use of video recording devices in public school self-contained special education classrooms. As the former Executive Director of the Linwood Center, a non-public special education school in Howard County, we used recording devices in all of our classrooms and common areas. We found the use of the devices very helpful in investigating incidents that occurred at the school and assisted us in determining if any abuse or neglect of students by staff or incidents with other students. The use of the devices was also very helpful in addressing any complaints that staff of parents had regarding conduct of staff. HB 226 contains the needed provisions to protect the privacy of students and other staff.



Frank Kirkland

Vice President of Quality Supports
The Arc Baltimore

Senate Bill 577 -- Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: Support

Hearing: EHEA Committee

Email:

Address:

Name:

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Sincerely,

House Bill 226: Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: Support

Hearing: Ways and Means 2/3/2022

Name: Tape Strickland
Address: 9155 Greenhill Rd
Lincoln Bridge MD 21781
Email: hope@abundanceofexcellence.com

I am in support of HB226 to allow cameras in self contained special education classrooms in Maryland. Surveillance cameras have become the cornerstone of security everywhere in today's world and schools are no exception. There are surveillance cameras in schools as a safety and security measure and a deterrent to crimes in our school hallways, front offices, gymnasiums, cafeterias and exteriors. Video surveillance in self contained special education classrooms will add a layer of protection for nonverbal students who can not come home and tell their parents about what happened to them in school as these specialized classrooms support many students who can not rely on speech alone to be heard and understood.

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[Signature]

February 13, 2022

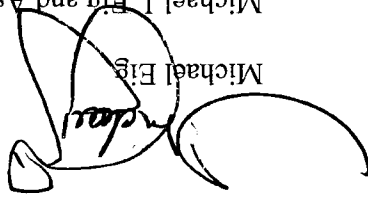
POSITION: SB 577-SUPPORT

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of EHEA:

I am writing to express my support of, and need for, Senate Bill 577, intended to place cameras in self-contained special education classrooms in certain, specified situations. Having practiced special education law in Maryland for over 46 years now, I have seen countless instances when parents or other professionals have described to me alleged inappropriate behavior or conduct in special education classrooms with accompanying indications of injuries to children who are unable to reliably report the actual circumstances. Even if no serious injuries are involved, the behavior being described or just suggested often has raised serious concerns as to what is going on in the classroom, from both an instructional and child welfare perspective.

The fact that these are certainly not frequent occurrences does nothing to detract from the seriousness of each instance. Clearly, providing a video record in such self-contained classes would serve two important purposes, first, the protection of the child and second, the protection of instructional staff who are not at fault. I would hope that everyone would see it in that light.

Thank you and good luck.



Michael Eig

Michael J. Eig and Associates, PC
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Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Michael.eig@lawforchildren.com

Senate Bill 577 - Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classrooms-Use of Video Recording Devices

POSITION: Support

Hearing: EHEA Committee

Name: DEBRA USARNE
Address: 309 SOUTH ST TERRACE
COLUMBIA MD 21044
Email: debrav@comcast.net

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