

## Michelle Drake

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To: Ways and Means Committee 2/3/22

Re: Support for Senate Bill 577/House Bill 226 Public Schools – Self-Contained Special Education Classroom – Use of Video Recording Devices

As a neurodivergent individual who suffered from bullying and abuse in K-12 public schools I am writing to ask you to support this bill to allow cameras in self-contained classrooms and give a voice to the students who are not able to come home and discuss events from their days or explain their injuries.

Many organizations in Maryland such as MESA, HCAS, the Arc MD, disability advocates and civil rights attorneys have weighed in on the 2022 language and we believe this bill will protect vulnerable students as well as teachers and staff who work in the classrooms and experience suspensions from false allegations.

The Comptroller wrote a letter in support and said it best, “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....”

Cameras are already in the schools. Cameras are in cafeterias, hallways, stairwells, front offices, vestibules, gymnasiums, and exteriors. We know cameras are used in these spaces as a deterrent to harm or theft and are a powerful tool when used properly.

The cameras can only be accessed when an incident is reported.

Please support HB226 and SB577 to allow cameras in self-contained classrooms in MD to ensure protections for our most vulnerable students and staff.

Sincerely,  
/S/  
Michelle Drake