



SENATE BILL 0577

Public Schools-Self-Contained Special Education Classroom-Use of Video Recording Devices

RICH GIBSON, HOWARD COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

POSITION: FAVORABLE FOR SB 0577

February 15, 2022

My name is Rich Gibson, I am the State's Attorney for Howard County. Part of my obligations as State's Attorney is to advocate for laws that enhance the safety and well-being of our community; that is the reason I am writing today to offer my support for Senate Bill 0577.

This bill, if passed, will offer a level of protection which currently does not exist for the weakest among us. Unfortunately, there is evil in this world and wrongdoers often seek to prey upon those that lack the ability to effectively advocate on their own behalf. Special needs students, some of whom are non-verbal or have difficulty communicating due to mental, physical, or emotional disabilities, are all too often taken advantage of by others in their learning environment, a place where they should feel safe to learn, play, and grow.

Senate Bill 0577, if put into effect, would provide a mechanism for protecting those students because cameras placed in those learning environments could deter and certainly could capture evidence of inappropriate conduct in those spaces. Evidence that would be critical in holding wrongdoers accountable and that allows us to not only protect that student, but also protect other students from future harmful conduct. Additionally, the footage obtained from the cameras could serve to exonerate individuals where there are allegations of wrongful behavior. For these reasons, **I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 0577.**