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State Senator Catherine D. Ingram

9th Senate District
135th General Assembly

Sponsor Testimony – Senate Bill 99, Education Committee May 23, 2023

Chair Brenner, Vice-Chair O’Brien and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on S.B. 99 also known as Sarah’s Law for Seizure Safe Schools. Sarah’s law is a reintroduction of H.B. 606 from 134th G.A.

This bill is named in honor of Sarah Linardos, the daughter of Harry Linardos and Sharon (DeWine) DeVore from Springfield, who passed away in 2018 from Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP). Sharon DeVore, along with the Epilepsy Alliance of Ohio, have shared their stories with me and have been passionate advocates for this legislation and instrumental in its introduction. It is my hope that you will get to hear from them in further hearings for this legislation.

The CDC estimates that there are approximately 16,900 children, ages 1 to 17 year old that are currently diagnosed with epilepsy in the State of Ohio. Epilepsy can affect people in very different ways because there are many causes and many different kinds of seizures. It has been found that the opportunity for academic success is increased when communities, schools, families, and students work together to meet the needs of students with chronic health conditions and provide safe and supportive learning environments. For students living with epilepsy, it is important that schools and staff are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment.

This bill requires public and chartered nonpublic schools to create an individualized seizure action plan, in collaboration with the student's parent or guardian, for each enrolled student who has an active seizure disorder diagnosis. Further, each school nurse or school administrator must identify each individual who has received training under the seizure action plan in the administration of drugs prescribed for seizure disorders. Additionally, the school nurse or another district employee also must coordinate seizure disorder care at each school and ensure that all required staff are trained in the care of students with seizure disorders.

The bill requires districts and schools to train at least one employee at each school, aside from a school nurse, on the implementation of seizure action plans for one hour every two years. Training must be consistent with guidelines and best practices established by a nonprofit organization that supports the welfare of individuals with epilepsy and seizure disorders, such as the Epilepsy Alliance Ohio, Epilepsy Foundation of Ohio, or other similar organizations as determined by the Department of Education.

14 states – Kentucky, Indiana, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, Oklahoma, Colorado, Alabama, Nebraska, Minnesota, Utah, and Florida - have enacted Seizure Safe Schools legislation to safeguard children with seizure disorders in schools. Ohio has the opportunity and obligation to equip school staff and administrators with the necessary skills to respond to emergent seizure situations and a responsibility to make schools a safe place for all students.

Sarah's Law was added by the house to the Operating Budget and has remained in the as passed version from the House. I would like to encourage and see continued support for this legislation as the budget moves through the senate.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Epilepsy Alliance of Ohio, the Epilepsy Foundation, and the DeVore Family for bringing this legislative need to my attention. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on this legislation and would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

1. <https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/download?key=18817&format=pdf>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/epilepsy/data/index.html>