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of Howard County**

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**Board of Education of Howard County
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland House of Delegates,
Ways and Means Committee
March 26, 2025**

SB0601: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures** with amendments to clarify expectations of services provided to advance enrollees.

SB0601 as introduced required local school systems to allow a dependent child of a service member to apply for advance enrollment in a public school. Current statute being amended by SB0601 already requires local school systems to allow a dependent child of a service member who is relocating to the State on military orders and is not domiciled in that county during the enrollment period to apply for enrollment in a public school in the county, in the same manner and at the same time as individuals domiciled in the county. To enroll a child in advance, SB0601 requires a service member to provide to the local superintendent military orders showing that the service member will be stationed in the State during the current or immediately following school year. The local superintendent must establish a remote registration process to allow for advance enrollment. The process may not charge a fee or require the service member or other parent or guardian or the dependent child to physically appear at a location within the county to complete any part of the advance enrollment.

Current statute also requires that within 10 days of the published arrival date on the service member's military orders, the service member shall provide the school with: (1) satisfactory evidence of the child's dependent status; (2) a copy of the military orders; and (3) proof of residence in the county. SB0601 amends this section to indicate that the 10 days applies to finalization of the advance enrollment.

Within the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) most of the new provisions of SB0601 are already accommodations that are made for students of service members. Pupil Personnel Workers and school-based registrars work case-by-case with families to accommodate needs when a military order is given. One amendment the Board would recommend, to give a more finite timeframe to the advance enrollment when solidified plans for relocation would likely be in place, is as follows:

(b) (2) TO ADVANCE ENROLL UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A SERVICE MEMBER SHALL PROVIDE TO A COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT, NOT MORE THAN SIX MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ANTICIPATED ARRIVAL, MILITARY ORDERS EVIDENCING THAT THE SERVICE MEMBER WILL BE STATIONED IN THE STATE DURING THE CURRENT OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SCHOOL YEAR.

On receipt of a valid advance enrollment under SB0601, the bill goes on to indicate that if the dependent child of the service member is a child with a disability who is receiving special education and services in the sending state equivalent to a free appropriate public education, the local school system enrolling the child promptly shall coordinate with the child's parents or guardians and the school district in the sending state to prevent undue delay in transferring

the child to the state. Within the House version of SB0601 (HB0596), amendments to this section clarify that on advance enrollment the remote registration process must provide the parent with an opportunity to note whether the child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan in the sending state. If a dependent child has an IEP or 504 Plan, the local board must ensure the child receives an appropriate education without undue delay in the county in which the child advance enrolls. A local board shall coordinate with a parent and the school system in the sending state to carry out this provision. While the clarification found in the House amendments are supported over the SB0601 amendments, staff would recommend a slight language change as follows:

(4) (II) IF A DEPENDENT CHILD HAS AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM OR A 504 PLAN IN THE SENDING STATE, THE COUNTY BOARD SHALL ENSURE THAT THE CHILD RECEIVES AN APPROPRIATE EDUCATION WITHOUT UNDUE DELAY UPON ARRIVAL IN THE COUNTY IN WHICH THE CHILD ADVANCE ENROLLS, INCLUDING, IF APPROPRIATE, EDUCATION UNDER AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM OR IN ACCORDANCE WITH A 504 PLAN.

The original bill also allowed dependent children to remain enrolled in school until completion of the highest grade level available at the school, and to have access to all academic courses and programs, including extracurricular activities and athletic and social programs, when using advance enrollment. In this section the House and Senate have amended the language differently. Amendments to SB0601 add that a student may remain enrolled subject to a case-by-case review of the local school system, and that the school system should prioritize the student's continuity in education when making this determination. The Senate version also adds that access to courses, programs, extracurricular activities, and athletics and social programs would be for those the student qualifies. Amendments to HB0596 alternately limit continued enrollment to completion of the current school year, and indicate they have access to courses, programs, extracurricular activities, and athletics and social programs in the same manner as other students enrolled in the school. While the House version gets more to the point about not giving advanced enrolled students a greater right of access, adding the following may make it clear that they are *eligible* in the same manner but not able to participate in advance/virtually:

(D) (2) A DEPENDENT CHILD OF A SERVICE MEMBER WHO USES ADVANCE ENROLLMENT SHALL HAVE ACCESS TO ACADEMIC COURSES AND PROGRAMS, INCLUDING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS UPON ARRIVAL IN THE COUNTY, IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE SCHOOL.

With the above amendments to limit the timeframe for advance enrollment and clarify actual services and programs are not provided until the student arrives in the county, we urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0601 from this Committee.