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Charles County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Local Revenues

Chair, Racing and Gaming

Chair, Southern Maryland
House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB0102/SB0263
Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures

Good afternoon, Chair Wilkins, Vice-Chair Feldmark and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Edith Patterson, sponsor of HB0102 - Education – Dependent Children of Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures.

This bill is a reintroduction of legislation considered last session. It passed both the House and the Senate with strong bipartisan support but ultimately did not reach the Governor’s desk after being caught up in conference at the end of session. I appreciate the opportunity to bring this important measure back before the Committee.

I was approached by the Department of Defense (DoD) to introduce this legislation as it is the product of a study conducted by the DoD Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLO) in collaboration with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University. This evaluation involved extensive interviews with stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels to identify specific initiatives and policies to support military-connected students. Four key initiatives were identified, and this legislation addresses one of them.

For military families, frequent relocations, or Permanent Change of Station (PCS), present significant challenges. These transitions can be particularly stressful for children who face disruptions to their education. A critical issue identified in the study was the lack of uniformity in implementing policies that support military families, creating inconsistencies and confusion. Currently, many military families are unaware of advanced enrollment options, and discrepancies exist in how this process is understood and implemented. School liaisons and personnel often lack adequate information, which exacerbates the stress and logistical challenges families face when relocating.

HB0102 aims to address these challenges by requiring county superintendents of schools to allow dependent children of service members to enroll in schools within their jurisdiction before physically moving to the area. Specifically, this legislation includes the following provisions:

1. Streamlining the Enrollment Process: Local school systems must coordinate with parents or guardians of children, including children with disabilities, and the sending school district to prevent delays in enrollment or the transfer of educational services.
2. Increasing Awareness: The legislation requires the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families, in consultation with relevant entities, to publish and maintain accessible information on school enrollment and related services for dependent children of service members.

The benefits of this legislation are clear and well-documented:

- Families who utilize advanced enrollment experience significantly less stress during the relocation process.
- Students can better select courses that meet their academic needs or interests, ensuring a smoother transition.

- Schools are more prepared to welcome incoming students, allowing them to start learning without unnecessary delays.
- For students with disabilities, advanced enrollment enables schools to begin securing necessary support services earlier, providing a stronger foundation for their success.

We are also offering an amendment to clarify implementation and ensure the bill is applied consistently and as intended. In summary, HB0102 is a straightforward yet impactful measure to support military families, reduce the stress of relocation, and improve educational outcomes for students. It is a vital step toward ensuring that Maryland stands as a model state for supporting the unique needs of military-connected students and their families. For these reasons, I respectfully ask for a favorable report on HB0102.

Thank you for your consideration,

Edith Patterson
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