

SB 853 Voluntary Ethical Special Education Certificate

Diana F. Bennett
833 Glen Allen Drive
Baltimore, MD 21229

Dear Senator Pinsky:

I write you today to voice my support for Senate Bill 853. This is an issue about which I feel strongly as it impacts the protection of the consumer, in this instance, the parents and families of children who have IEPs. This bill seeks to protect those parents who opt to use the services of a special education advocate. Having worked as a pediatric speech-language pathologist in the inner city of Baltimore, I appreciate the important work that advocates do on behalf of their clients. However, not all advocates are created equal, and not all are truly qualified to serve in the child's best interests. This pro-parent bill simply seeks to provide an additional tool to parents who are looking for assistance with navigating the complicated IEP process.

The Bill seeks to create a voluntary certification program for special education advocates. Advocates are not required or mandated to get this additional certification, but it provides an avenue if they seek to hone their skills. The Maryland State Department of Education would create or procure and administer this program so as to insure its fidelity. This bill does not prohibit parents from engaging non-certificated advocates. It does not prevent parents from having anyone of their choosing at the meeting. Most importantly, it does not permit school districts to violate any provisions of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts as you make this decision. Please contact me at the above address if you have any questions or need additional information. I can be contacted by phone at 301-848-8030. An email can be sent to dianarfb@hotmail.com

Sincerely,



Diana F. Bennett