

Stephanie McAllister  
6966 Ducketts Lane  
Elkridge, MD 21075  
(410)579-1613

HB 1595/SB 853-Voluntary Ethical Special Education Advocate  
Certificate Program-SUPPORT-Stephanie McAllister

To the House Ways and Means Committee,

I am a parent with two children with disabilities whom has had to use a special education advocate to fight for the rights of my children in the MD public school system. I was extremely fortunate to have had an advocate who was skilled, knowledgeable, and understood the rights and laws to advocate correctly for my children.

Now on the other hand I am a Technical Assistant for Special Ed here in the public school system of MD and interact with many advocates. They are not always knowledgeable and don't always "ask" for what's in the best interest of the individual student. They are guiding our families in the wrong direction. Not only are they guiding them incorrectly they are charging ridiculous prices to advocate for the students. It would be great if the advocates in the state of MD had a baseline of the same training. I can't think of any job that you would work that there isn't some kind of baseline training so why wouldn't our students advocates be held to the same standards as others who hold jobs. I understand that in HB 1595/SB853 it wouldn't make a certificate mandatory but it would

guide families to see which advocates have been trained to advocate for the student correctly with the knowledge of laws, the process, what's a reasonable request and the understanding of the school setting.

HB 1595/SB853 would provide a degree of protection for families and their students seeking special education advocates. Thank you for your consideration on behalf of families and students. Please give HB 1595/SB853 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Stephanie McAllister