

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 853: EDUCATION—VOLUNTARY ETHICAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVOCATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 18, 2020

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 25 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, opposes Senate Bill 853, which would create a “voluntary ethical special education advocate certificate program.” The EAC opposes Senate Bill 853 for several reasons. First, the purpose of the bill is unclear. “Advocate” is not defined, and it is not clear who the bill is intended to encompass. Second, the bill would allow “advocates” who complete a webinar or training module to obtain a certificate of completion, but the content and length of the webinar or module are not specified. There is no reason to assume that a person who completes the webinar or training module would, by virtue of having received a certificate of completion, have reached any particular level of achievement or would automatically be an “ethical special education advocate.” Third, because the program is voluntary, there is no guarantee that “advocates” who may be in need of the training envisioned by Senate Bill 853 would avail themselves of it. Senate Bill 853 is vague and would have no practical meaning if enacted. In fact, the bill might have the unintended consequence of leading people to believe that an advocate who possesses a certificate of completion of the program is more qualified than he or she actually is. For these reasons, the EAC opposes Senate Bill 853.

For more information, please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Chairperson, at 410-727-6352, ext. 2505 or at lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org.

Respectfully submitted,

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