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Chairperson
131 House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Re: SB 853/HB 1595 VOLUNTARY ETHICAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVOCATE
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM**

Dear Chairperson,

I am a parent and behavior analyst in Maryland. I support SB 853 and HB 1595. I have participated in meetings with individuals who claim that they are advocates, however lack the skills and knowledge of the special education process in county/state. It is frustrating to know that there are people out there getting paid, who do not have the expertise to guide families. In addition, we have two children with IEPs and will only ask for support from my colleagues, whom we know are highly qualified, skilled, and up-to-date on the laws. This is a growing problem and the ones who suffer are the children and families.

SB 853/HB 1595 would provide a degree of consumer protection for families seeking special education advocates. This is a pro-parent bill which seeks to provide a level of consumer protection for families seeking the assistance of a special education advocate. There are times in which a family feels they need additional support or that they are not being heard by the school system. This is generally when special education advocates become involved.

At this time, there are no minimum requirements for an individual to be considered a special education advocate, nor is there a code of ethics guiding the actions of special education advocates. The voluntary registry would be a mechanism for families and care givers to locate individuals who have committed to working on behalf of students in an ethical manner.

Thank you for your consideration on behalf of individuals with educational or developmental disabilities and their families. I hope that you will give SB 853/HB1595 a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Julia and Vincent DeMino

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