

Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL 273: EDUCATION—VOLUNTARY ETHICAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVOCATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

JANUARY 27, 2021

POSITION: OPPOSE

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of more than 30 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, opposes House Bill 273, which would create a “voluntary ethical special education advocate certificate program.” The EAC opposes House Bill 273 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 266 would avail themselves of it. House Bill 273 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 House Bill 273.

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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