



February 14, 2022

Maryland House Senate
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of SB 307: Public Records – Retention and Inspection - Transparency in Public Records Act of 2022

Members of the Maryland Senate’s Education, Health and Environment Committee.

Our community of over 1400 military and non-military families wish to offer our support for SB 307.

I am the parent of a child with multiple challenges and disabilities. He has been bounced between 504 plans and IEP plans for years. Parents like myself often find ourselves left asking for documentation from our local school systems and the state’s department of education. We are just one subset of MD citizens requesting improved transparency from our state and county government agencies.

Sometimes our children are involved in incidents in school or on school buses. They often do not have the ability to fully communicate what happened to them during the school day. Having the ability and PIA process to relay on for timely information, records and video of incidents is crucial to their care and safety on and off of school property and buses. Trying to keep up with changes to school system policies, I very often I have found myself having to request documentation from our local school system by way of the Public Information Act.

As if the special education process is not difficult enough for families and students, factors like a lack of a reliable and consistent data sets further complicates our ability to advocate for appropriate services and accommodations for our children during the school academic year, and between academic years.

Very often the information is closely guarded by school systems, crucial to helping track, and measure a student’s progress toward their IEP goals. School system policies and local special education process guidelines often inhibit parents, and advocates, accessing student records in a timely manner. Thus, negatively impacting student’s access to the programs, supports and accommodations needed by those students and accessing Free Appropriate Public Education or FAPE, guaranteed to them under federal education law.

But Maryland’s current PIA process can be very time consuming, and frustrating. School systems cause delays, provide incomplete responses to requests, and a previous lack of a robust appeals process along with stone walling tactics employed by some county agencies have made my job as a parent and



advocate for children with disabilities even harder, if not impossible to accomplish. Public agencies don't feel seem to feel compelled to abide by response guidelines within the state's current PIA framework and laws. Often forcing us to request and access the help of the state's Ombudsman's office. A wonderful and helpful small staff of people. But they are far too busy dealing with a variety of PIA request issues. As a parent and advocate, I shouldn't have to take up the time of the Ombudsman with simple records requests that school districts seem to struggle with knowing how to fulfill or worse yet purposely slow their response times to delay having to contend with SPED compliance issues.

We feel that SB 307 would help to solve some of these issues with equal access to public records that relate to the care, safety and education of our special needs student population.

Please support Senate Bill 307 and return a favorable report. Thank you for your time, and for considering our testimony today.

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Parent, Lead Advocate and Director of Public Policy

Parent Advocacy Consortium (Find us on Facebook/Meta)|

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