

SB601_Brooks.pdf

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Position: FAV

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 601
Education – Dependent Children of Service Members –
Advance Enrollment Procedures

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 19, 2025

Chairman Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on SB 601 – Education – Dependent Children of Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures. This legislation provides much-needed support for the families of our nation’s service members by ensuring that the children of active-duty military personnel have seamless access to public education when their families relocate to Maryland due to military orders.

In 2009, Maryland joined the [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#). Specifically, the compact has provisions to facilitate timely transfers of educational records and the continuation of schooling for children dependents of service members. In 2020, the General Assembly [amended](#) the Compact to ensure that dependent children of service members could apply for enrollment in public schools in the same manner and at the same time as individuals domiciled in the county. This change was made to close a loophole which prevented many military dependent children from participating in competitive enrollment and magnet courses.

However, this change still presented a challenge for many military families. To enroll in the “same manner” as other students, military families had to travel to Maryland because many Maryland school districts do not offer a remote enrollment option. Not only does each county have a unique procedure for enrolling students, sometimes each individual school might have their own unique process for enrollment. This reality poses significant challenges for military families moving to Maryland and undermines the goals of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children.

SB 601 directly addresses this issue by mandating that local superintendents must establish a remote enrollment registration process to allow for advance enrollment. Then, the enrollment is finalized within ten days of the military family arriving in the state. This bill also includes provisions to support children with disabilities, ensuring they receive uninterrupted special education services.

Given that there are [approximately 933,000 school aged children in military families](#), SB 601 provides a crucial safeguard to protect their rights to a stable and equitable education. Beyond educational stability, SB 601 enhances Maryland's standing as a military-friendly state and aligns with efforts at the federal level to improve military family quality of life.

Already states such as [Virginia](#), [South Carolina](#), [Washington](#), [Ohio](#), and [California](#) have enacted similar laws to allow remote enrollment. This bill will reaffirm Maryland's commitment to the men and women who serve our country and ensure that their children do not face unnecessary barriers in their pursuit of academic success.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB 601.

With kindest regards,

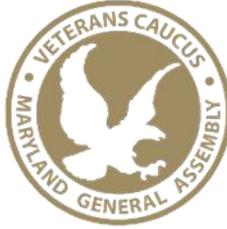
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks

VeteransCaucusLegislationSupportLetter_SB601.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV



MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
VETERANS CAUCUS

February 12, 2025

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee
2W Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB601, Education – Dependent Children of Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures

Hearing Date: February 19, 2025

Dear Chairman Feldman,

Please let this letter serve as notice of the support of the Maryland General Assembly Senate Veterans Caucus for Senate Bill 601.

After review by our respective legislative committee, the Senate Veterans Caucus believes that the above-mentioned legislation would provide a valuable benefit to the veterans of the State of Maryland and requests a favorable report.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin F. Brooks".

Senator Benjamin Brooks
Senate Chair

20250214_MCFP_AM_Support_MD_SB_601_Education_v1.pd

Uploaded by: Christopher Arnold

Position: FAV



MANPOWER AND
RESERVE AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1500

February 18, 2025

Maryland General Assembly
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chairperson

Remarks of
Christopher R. Arnold
Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison
United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office

Support of: Senate Bill 601 – AN ACT concerning Education – Dependent Children of Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures

Testimony

Honorable members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee, the Department of Defense is grateful for the opportunity to support the policies reflected in Senate Bill 601, relating to various military family education requirements. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children provides opportunities for assistance during transition, but does not address advance enrollment timing or procedures, or school placement stability, necessitating this important legislation.¹

I am Christopher Arnold, the Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison at the United States Department of Defense-State Liaison Office, operating under the direction of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. I thank you for the opportunity to address you today and for your support of our service members and their families.

Maryland's current advance enrollment law helps minimize disruptions in education during transitions. However, a recent study published by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Pennsylvania State University as part of the DOD's efforts to identify and assess the educational experiences and achievement of K-12 military-connected children found not every school district allowed for remote registration.² Parents of students with special needs also reported facing various challenges relating to their enrollment options and placement stability.³

¹ Sharmila Mann. Ben Erwin. "Response to Information Request." *Education Commission of the States*. December 2020. Retrieved from https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Information-Request_Military-Child-Enrollment-1.pdf

² Karre, Jennifer, Kristin K. Brawley, Meghan Baker, Keith Aronson, and Daniel F. Perkins. "State Implementation of Four Initiatives to Support Military-Connected Students." (2023). https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/clearinghouse_report_speakmc_initiatives_20240220rev.pdf

³ *Ibid.*

Study participants recognized that advance enrollment overwhelmingly reduces stress on families, helps schools be more prepared, decreases out-of-school time, and increases student access to courses they need or want.⁴ Most acknowledged improvements are necessary to enforce policies, and increase parent and school awareness.⁵

As with most statewide K-12 education policies that set a baseline level of support, specific guidelines not prescribed within the language of the state policy are left up to districts for local implementation. The policies reflected in Senate Bill 601 address this challenge by allowing the military orders that are accepted as proof of residency for the purpose of enrollment in a public school by children of members of the armed forces to be transmitted remotely, rather than requiring a military family to travel to the school district in person, which disrupts the military mission.⁶

Military families are at a disadvantage when it comes to the enrollment options available to their children due to military-directed reassignments. Uniformed service members and their families have limited housing options when moving to a new location as part of a permanent change of station. As a result, school and district options for military children can also be limited. Many military families must move from temporary to permanent housing at some point after school has started, or move from permanent to temporary housing prior to moving out of state on military orders. The policies in Senate Bill 601 guarantee school placement stability, allowing military students to remain in their school placement for the duration of the school year despite a change of residence.

Maryland has already demonstrated leadership in supporting military families by being the first state to create a Department of Veterans and Military Families and include its Military Interstate Children's Compact (MIC3) State Council leadership on the state's military affairs coordinating body, the Maryland Military Installation Council. This representation has helped ensure military family perspectives are considered in education policy implementation.

Senate Bill 601 builds on this foundation by codifying specific protections for military children with special needs. The policies in the bill are also made accessible for all military families, in accordance with the DOD's recommendations stemming from the Penn State report.⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Approximately 185,000 U.S. military children move between schools annually. Military service members are routinely reassigned to new duty stations in the summer, due to mission and training requirements. As a result of these summer moves, they may potentially miss their child's school registration and other important application dates that occur in the spring. Long-term negative impacts include having to shift their planned courses of study, which may require them to take courses in summer school, or even force them to graduate later than their peers.

Service members typically receive official military orders detailing their upcoming assignment 90 days to 6 months prior to their move. Allowing military families to enroll their children in school, register for classes and apply for specialized programs at the same time as their peers, prior to physically arriving to their location, will help to facilitate their uninterrupted educational progress and smooth integration into their new communities, and relieve unneeded stress during their transition between locations.

⁷ This bill clarifies that military-connected students with special needs are included in the already-existing advance enrollment policy in Maryland. In does not change the law, it simply clarifies it.

Military children are largely adaptable and demonstrate both flexibility and resilience during permanent change of station (PCS) transitions.⁸ However, for children with disabilities, such moves can be difficult, not only because of the importance of routine and stability in treatment, but also because they often have coordinated care teams (e.g., therapists, specialists, educators) that need to be reestablished by their family with every relocation.⁹

Military children will change schools an average of 6–9 times between kindergarten and 12th grade.¹⁰ For military families of children with disabilities, this cycle can be especially overwhelming as the burden to ensure continuity of care tends to fall on the family, at a time when those service members may be dealing with a variety of other military-connected stressors.¹¹

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) sets the minimum special education requirements that all states must follow to provide a free and appropriate education while allowing states flexibility to determine many specifics. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability, including students in public education, who must have reasonable accommodations in place.

Delays in implementation of the support to military children can create a loss of educational opportunity and contribute to learning gaps. These losses can be magnified with each military move, greatly impacting child identification, eligibility determinations and receipt of services under IDEA or Section 504.

States can ameliorate this issue in the education arena by ensuring policies are in place to support military children who need access to special education or accommodations for their disabilities in the public education setting.

Another study conducted in 2020 found that 51% of active-duty families with a child in special education had trouble transferring their child's IEP to their new school.¹² Another study conducted in 2021 found 31% of military families indicated that their children with disabilities went without services for more than 60 days following a military move.¹³ And 42% reported that

⁸ Masten, A. S. (2013). Afterword: What we can learn from military children and families. *The Future of Children*, 23(2), 199-212. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23595627>.

⁹ Rous, B. S., & Hallam, R. A. (2012). Transition services for young children with disabilities: Research and future directions. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 31(4), 232-240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121411428087>.

¹⁰ Bradshaw, C. P., Sudhinaraset, M., Mmari, K., & Blum, R. W. (2010). School transitions among military adolescents: A qualitative study of stress and coping. *School Psychology Review*, 39(1), 84–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2010.12087792>.

¹¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2022). *Special education: DOD programs and services for military-dependent students with disabilities*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105015.pdf>.

¹² Blue Star Families. (2020). 2020 Military family lifestyle survey: Comprehensive report. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/BSF_MFLS_CompReport_FULLL.pdf

¹³ Barnhill, J., Picchini Schaffer, A., Consedine, M., DeVoss Mahany, C., & Shuman, A. (2022). Military children in special education: The real, perceived, and unknown barriers to accessing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Partners in Promise. <https://thepromiseact.org/wp-content/uploads/Partners-in-PROMISE-2022-Survey-Findings-FINAL.pdf>.

their Individualized Education Plan was not implemented once they arrived at their new duty location.

Recent Department of Defense analysis of military family support programs has particular relevance for Maryland’s military families. A 2025 report to Congress found that without consistent implementation of the Military Student Identifier (MSI) across all State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies, it is not feasible to collect reliable information about military children with special education needs in public schools.¹⁴ The Department’s analysis also highlighted that school districts often postpone special education evaluations until their own response to intervention process has been implemented, even when children transfer with an existing evaluation in progress.¹⁵

Senate Bill 601 clarifies in statute that evaluations must be conducted expeditiously, even when they occur during summer recess or intermediate periods. This is consistent with a November 2022 letter issued to all state directors of special education by the U.S. Department of Education, strongly encouraging school districts to expedite their evaluations of “highly mobile children”, which included military connected children.¹⁶

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the policies reflected in Senate Bill 601, and are especially grateful to the bill sponsor, Senator Brooks, as well as to the members of Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee for considering this important issue.

As always, as liaison to the Mid-Atlantic region, I stand ready to answer whatever questions you may have.

Yours etc.,

CHRISTOPHER R. ARNOLD
Mid-Atlantic Region Liaison
Defense-State Liaison Office

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2025). *Recommendations for the Improvement of the Military Interstate Children’s Compact*. Forthcoming.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Education. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/Letter-to-State-Directors-of-Special-Education-on-Ensuring-a-High-Quality-Education-for-Highly-Mobile-Children-11-10-2022.pdf>

DVMF Lindsay Livingston Support SB0601.pdf

Uploaded by: Lindsay Livingston

Position: FAV



Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY

Lindsay Livingston, DVMF Director of Veteran and Military Family Programs TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF Senate Bill 601 Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 19, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 601. My name is Lindsay Livingston, I serve as the Director of Veteran and Military Family Programs for the Department of Veterans and Military Families. Our mission is to guide veterans and their families through life's transitions and to position Maryland as the premier state for veterans and their loved ones.

I am also a proud military spouse of over 17 years. My husband has faithfully served in the U.S. Navy for over 22 years, of which he served 15 consecutive years of sea duty. Together, we have raised three boys who, like so many military children, have had to navigate the challenges of frequent relocations.

On average, a military child moves 6-9 times during their K-12 career. **My oldest son, now in eighth grade, is in his sixth school.** Every move brings a new set of challenges—enrolling in a new school, transferring transcripts, ensuring continued access to support services, and adjusting to different state policies and requirements. As a mother, these transitions are not just logistically difficult but emotionally exhausting. **The burden of advocating for my children's education while managing the stress of relocation should not fall so heavily on military families.**

Senate Bill 601 provides a vital solution. By allowing military families to advance enroll their children remotely before arriving in Maryland, this bill removes a significant barrier to educational continuity. **It ensures that military children are not left behind waiting for paperwork to process or seats to become available. For families with children who need special education services, this bill also facilitates coordination between school districts, preventing unnecessary delays in receiving essential support.**

Maryland is home to thousands of military families, and we must remain competitive in attracting and retaining them. **Twenty states have already passed legislation to make school enrollment easier for military-connected families.** When service members receive orders to move, they are not just looking for a place to live—they are looking for communities to thrive in—they are looking for employment and the best schools for their children. This bill sends a strong message that Maryland values its military community and is committed to making their transition here as smooth as possible.

THE WINELAND BUILDING, FOURTH FLOOR
16 FRANCIS STREET, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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veterans.maryland.gov
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

By passing Senate Bill 601, Maryland can ensure that military children have the stability they need to succeed and show that we are a state that truly supports those who serve. I urge you to support this bill and remove unnecessary obstacles for the families who sacrifice so much for our nation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

COA written- SB 601 Dependent Children of Service

Uploaded by: Lynn Nash

Position: FAV



Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service

Protecting the interests of the USPHS Commissioned Corps since 1951

February 19, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report – SB 601 – Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Distinguished Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the Commissioned Officers Association, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on **SB 601 – Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures**.

This bill would require a county superintendent of schools to allow the dependent child of a service member to be enrolled in a county school upon the receipt of orders for a permanent change of station or reassignment through a remote enrollment process. For children who have a disability, the school system will initiate the transfer and reevaluation of the individualized education plan. The enrollment must be finalized within 10 days of receipt of the request for enrollment. This bill also allows the child to remain enrolled in the school until completion of the highest grade level available in the school.

Military families move every two -three years. For children, changing schools frequently can be traumatic if things don't go well, or amazingly simple if policies allow parents to do things remotely. For High School Juniors, this bill allows them to stay behind and finish high school with their friends—a major issue for families who move so frequently.

For children who have IEPs, transfers can become difficult. Each specialist of the appropriate team must review the plans, determine what services are available; what services need to be secured; and what additional testing is necessary to ensure that when the child arrives, that services are in

Request for FAVORABLE Report – SB 601 – Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures

place. For children with significant issues, service members generally rotate around **EIGHT** major medical centers, where children can get the appropriate medical care. These include:

1. Naval Medical Center, San Diego, California;
2. Eisenhower Medical Center, Georgia;
3. Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii; and
4. O’Callaghan Military Medical Center, Nevada;
5. Womack Army Medical Center, North Carolina;
6. Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio Texas;
7. Madigan Army Medical Center, Washington;
8. and **Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland.**

This bill goes a long way toward making school transfers timely and efficient, especially for children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Because we have a medical center in the state, **SB 601 – Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures** is especially important to service families arriving in Maryland.

The Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service as well as the Maryland Military Coalition ***strongly support SB 601*** and asks the Committee for a **FAVORABLE report**.

The mission of the Commissioned Officers Association (COA) is to protect and enhance the public health and safety of the United States by supporting and advancing the interests of the Commissioned Corps and its officers through advocacy, education, training and dissemination of professional information. This includes the 1398 officers, 8 Ready Reservists and over 7,000 retirees living in Maryland.

We want to thank Senator Brooks for his continued commitment to our veterans and the uniformed services community in Maryland.

Respectfully,



Lynn A. Nash, PhD, RN, PHCNS-BC, FAAN
CAPTAIN (Retired), United States Public Health Service
Commissioned Officers Association Director
Maryland Military Coalition
Lynn.Slepski@outlook.com

DVMF SB601 Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Morgan Murphy

Position: FAV



Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY

**Senate Bill 601- Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures
SUPPORT**

February 17, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families (DVMF) is committed to leading veterans and their families through life's transitions, making Maryland the best state for the military-connected communities. DVMF fulfills its mission through five core programs: the Service and Benefits Program, which helps veterans access federal, state, and local earned benefits; Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, offering assisted living and skilled nursing care; the Cemetery and Memorial Program, providing dignified resting places and maintaining memorials honoring Maryland's veterans; the Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program, fostering connection and awareness; and the Maryland Veterans Trust Fund, offering financial assistance to veterans and their families in need. These programs reflect Maryland's commitment to honoring and empowering its military-connected community.

The Department of Veterans and Military Families supports Senate Bill 601 which seeks to establish advance enrollment procedures for the dependent children of service members relocating to Maryland under military orders. This bill is a critical step in ensuring that Maryland remains a military-friendly state, easing the educational transition for military-connected families who already face unique challenges due to frequent relocations.

Military-connected children move an average of six to nine times during their K-12 education, often encountering delays in school enrollment, disrupted coursework, and difficulty accessing specialized programs. Senate Bill 601 directly addresses these challenges by:

- **Ensuring Military-Connected Students Can Enroll in Advance:** This bill requires county superintendents to allow military families with dependent K-12 children to enroll in school in advance, providing them with equitable access to school placement, course registration, and charter school lotteries before physically relocating to the state.

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- **Preventing Disruptions for Students with Disabilities:** The bill mandates local school systems to coordinate with parents and the sending state's school district to ensure the seamless transfer of students with disabilities, preventing delays in receiving special education services.
- **Facilitating a Remote Registration Process:** By establishing a no-cost, remote enrollment option, this bill removes unnecessary barriers and prevents service members from having to appear in person to complete their child's school registration.
- **Providing Long-Term Educational Stability:** The bill guarantees that military-dependent K-12 students who utilize advance enrollment will be able to remain in their chosen school through the completion of the highest grade level available, ensuring educational consistency despite future relocations.
- **Improving Access to Educational Programs:** Military-connected students will have the same rights as their peers to participate in academic programs, extracurricular activities, and athletic and social programs from the moment they are enrolled.

By passing Senate Bill 601, Maryland will demonstrate its commitment to supporting military families and honoring their sacrifices. The ability to enroll in school without unnecessary delays significantly eases the burden on service members and their families, ensuring their children can transition smoothly into new educational environments without disruption to their academic progress.

Thank you for your attention to this important proposal and I ask the committee for a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony Woods". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A" and "W".

Anthony C. Woods
Secretary

SB601.Council.Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FAV



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 19, 2025

SB 601: Education – Dependent Children of Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures

Position: **Support**

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to lead the lives they want with the support they need. As a statewide public policy organization led by people with developmental disabilities and their families, we support SB 601 as another way to make sure that happens.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- Allow service members to enroll dependent children in advance for school
- Require coordination between the new school, sending school, and family for children with disabilities when a service member advance enrolls a dependent child with a disability

WHY is it important?

- **There are over 62,000 active duty, National Guard, and reserve members in Maryland.**
- **Those active duty, National Guard, and reserve members have almost 44,000 children.ⁱ**
- The CDC estimates that nearly 9% of children ages 3-17 years old has one or more developmental disability.ⁱⁱ In Maryland, that possibly means about **5,400 of the children of active duty, National Guard, and reserve members of the military have a developmental disability.**
- At least one study of the effects of military deployment on children suggests that **there is a relationship between parent deployment and adverse risk for developmental delays and disabilities in children.ⁱⁱⁱ** The sooner, and more often families work with their child's school, the more likely they are to learn and succeed in Maryland schools.

The Need to Focus on Military Families

- Our work includes outreach and connections to groups related to our priorities and mission, such as supporting families of people with developmental disabilities. That led us to partner with the Department of Veterans and Military Families in a formal Memorandum of Understanding. We are collaborating because **military families of children and adults with developmental disabilities have unique needs. SB 601 addresses some of the unique needs of military families.** For these reasons, the Council supports SB 601.

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director. RLondon@md-council.org

ⁱ December 2023, Military State Policy Source. <<https://statepolicy.militaryonesource.mil/state/MD>>

ⁱⁱ July 2023, NCHS Data Brief No. 473 < <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db473.pdf>>

ⁱⁱⁱ Nguyen, et al. The Effects of Military Deployment on Early Childhood Development. The US Army Medical Department Journal. Oct-Dec 2014, pgs. 81-86.

SB 601 - Education - Dependent Children of Service

Uploaded by: Nia Callender

Position: FWA



PSSAM
Public School Superintendents' Association
OF MARYLAND

Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
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marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: SB 601

TITLE: Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures

DATE: February 19, 2025

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 601 **with amendments**.

This bill requires local school systems to allow a dependent child of a service member to apply for advance enrollment in a public school and specifies requirements for advance enrollment procedures. The Secretary of Veterans and Military Families, in consultation with specified entities, must publish and maintain information on (1) advance enrollment procedures and (2) any assistance and services available to service members regarding advance enrollment. The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of Senate Bill 601 in addressing the challenges faced by current enrollment procedures for dependent students of service members. PSSAM is pleased to support this bill with two amendments to streamline and clarify the enrollment process.

We request an amendment to section (D)(2), which states that the advanced enrolled student "shall have access to all academic courses and programs, including extracurricular activities". We ask that clarifying language is added so the sentence reads as follows: "shall have access to all academic courses and programs THEY QUALIFY FOR, including extracurricular activities." This clarification is in keeping with the academic requirements that may be needed for certain courses or extracurricular activities.

Additionally, we request an amendment to retain the existing authority superintendents have over which school the incoming student attends, ensuring placements remain tied to the student's residence and district processes. Without such clarification, this bill could unintentionally allow students to pick and remain in a school, even if they no longer live in the attendance zone or county.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 601 **with amendments**.