

Education Advocacy Coalition

for Students with Disabilities

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 58: LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT—PARENTAL SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT LEAVE ACT

DATE: January 29, 2025

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, strongly supports Senate Bill 58, which would require employers to provide at least 12 hours of paid parental engagement leave each school year to employees. This bill would be helpful to all parents but would particularly benefit parents of children with disabilities by enabling them to attend their children's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and other special education-related meetings. Although these meetings must be held at a time and place convenient for parents and school staff, the meetings occur during school hours, and parents must use precious leave time hours or, if they are called to frequent meetings for their child or do not have leave time, risk losing their jobs in order to attend these meetings. Federal and state special education laws impose requirements on school systems to involve parents in their children's IEP meetings, including, but not limited to, provision of advance notice of meetings, provision of interpreters for meetings if needed, and documentation of efforts to reach parents who have not responded to meeting notices. When parents are unable to secure leave time from work to participate in these meetings, whether in-person or virtual, these rights can feel illusory.

Senate Bill 58 recognizes that the involvement of parents in their child's education is of prime importance, and if enacted, would enable parents of children with disabilities to participate more fully in their children's education. For these reasons, the EAC offers strong support for this bill.

Please contact Leslie Seid Margolis, Education Advocacy Coalition co-chairperson, lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org or 443-692-2505 with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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Beth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland, Education Advocacy Coalition Co-Chairperson

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Education Advocacy Coalition Testimony: SB 58

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Ellen A. Callegary, Attorney (Retired)

Rich Ceruolo, Parent

Michelle Davis, M.Ed., ABCs for Life Success

Lisa Frank and Andrea Bennett, Special Kids Company

Marjorie Guldán and Rosemary Kitzinger, Bright Futures, LLC

Riya Gupta, Strong Schools Maryland

Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course, LLC

Leilani Hardy, Maryland Coalition of Families

Kalman Hettleman, Independent Advocate

Morgan Durand Horvath, M.Ed., Abilities Network

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland, Education Advocacy Coalition Co-Chairperson

Mark Martin, Law Offices of Mark B. Martin, P.A.

Monica Martinez, Martinez Advocacy

Beth Nolan, Education Team Allies

Sumaiya Olatunde, H2D Counseling

Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center

Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Kate Raab and Nicole Joseph, Law Office of Nicole Joseph

Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism

Jaime E. Seaton, BGS Law, LLC

Karleen Spitulnik and Winifred Winston, Decoding Dyslexia Maryland

Ronnetta Stanley, M.Ed., Loud Voices Together

Wayne Steedman, Steedman Law Group, LLC

Guy Stephens, Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint

Maureen van Stone, Genevieve Hornik, Kendall Eaton, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Liz Zogby, Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition

Also joining testimony: Maryland Education Coalition