

EDITH J. PATTERSON, Ed.D.

Legislative District 28  
Charles County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Local Revenues

Chair, Racing and Gaming

Chair, Southern Maryland  
House Delegation



The Maryland House of Delegates  
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of HB0596/SB0601**

**Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures**

Good afternoon, Chair Atterbeary, Vice-Chair Wilkins and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Edith Patterson, sponsor of **HB0596 - Education – Dependent Children of Service Members – Advance Enrollment Procedures**.

I was approached by the Department of Defense (DoD) to introduce this legislation as it is the product of a study conducted by the DoD Defense-State Liaison Office (DSLLO) in collaboration with the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Penn State University. This evaluation involved extensive interviews with stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels to identify specific initiatives and policies to support military-connected students. Four key initiatives were identified, and this legislation addresses one of them.

For military families, frequent relocations, or Permanent Change of Station (PCS), present significant challenges. These transitions can be particularly stressful for children who face disruptions to their education. A critical issue identified in the study was the lack of uniformity in implementing policies that support military families, creating inconsistencies and confusion. Currently, many military families are unaware of advanced enrollment options, and discrepancies exist in how this process is understood and implemented. School liaisons and personnel often lack adequate information, which exacerbates the stress and logistical challenges families face when relocating.

HB0596 aims to address these challenges by requiring county superintendents of schools to allow dependent children of service members to enroll in schools within their jurisdiction before physically moving to the area. Specifically, this legislation includes the following provisions:

1. Streamlining the Enrollment Process: Local school systems must coordinate with parents or guardians of children, including children with disabilities, and the sending school district to prevent delays in enrollment or the transfer of educational services.
2. Increasing Awareness: The legislation requires the Secretary of Veterans and Military Families, in consultation with relevant entities, to publish and maintain accessible information on school enrollment and related services for dependent children of service members.

The benefits of this legislation are clear and well-documented:

- Families who utilize advanced enrollment experience significantly less stress during the relocation process.
- Students can better select courses that meet their academic needs or interests, ensuring a smoother transition.
- Schools are more prepared to welcome incoming students, allowing them to start learning without unnecessary delays.
- For students with disabilities, advanced enrollment enables schools to begin securing necessary support services earlier, providing a stronger foundation for their success.

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In summary, HB0596 is a straightforward yet impactful measure to support military families, reduce the stress of relocation, and improve educational outcomes for students. It is a vital step toward ensuring that Maryland stands as a model state for supporting the unique needs of military-connected students and their families.

I respectfully urge you to give HB0596 a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration,

Edith Patterson  
Charles County