



**Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families
Office of the Secretary**

WES MOORE
GOVERNOR

ARUNA MILLER
LT. GOVERNOR

ANTHONY C. WOODS
SECRETARY

**House Bill 596 - Education - Dependent Children of Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures
SUPPORT**

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
130 Taylor, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Atterbeary 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 House Bill 596 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. House Bill 596 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.

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

TOLL FREE: 866-793-1577 • ANNAPOLIS: 410-260-3838 • FAX: 410-216-7928

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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 House Bill 596, 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