



SB263 - Education - Dependent Children of Active Service Members - Advance Enrollment Procedures

Position: Support
Hearing Date: February 25, 2026
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

The Maryland Coalition of Families (MCF) is a statewide nonprofit organization that provides family peer support services at no cost to families who have a child or other loved one with a mental health, substance use, or problem gambling disorder. As experienced caregivers, we provide support, guidance, and hope to people who love or care for someone with a behavioral health challenge and advocate to improve the systems they rely on.

Military families with children who have behavioral health challenges face many obstacles when deploying to a new location. Finding new community healthcare providers and establishing school-based supports takes time, meaning that children risk losing valuable progress toward education and health goals. One parent served by MCF shared “I am the parent of an active-duty service member’s dependent child. He has attended numerous schools since pre-K due to PCS moves. With each relocation, he usually misses up to about 5 weeks of education, and once enrolled, it takes another 2 to 4 months to have an IEP review meeting.”

These types of delays are disruptive to a child and can create new or exacerbate existing behavioral health challenges. Allowing military families to enroll their child in school in advance will facilitate timely access to important school services including Individualized Education Plan and 504 Plan services and provide critical continuity of care. Service members and the families will also have peace of mind knowing that this significant step is completed before they arrive in Maryland, lessening the stress created by deployments.

Advance enrollment also means that schools have the opportunity to review a child’s needs and prepare proactively to ensure the teachers have the resources they need to help student be successful.

For these reasons, MCF fully supports SB263.

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