

# SENATE BILL 504

F1, P1

(01r0522)

## ENROLLED BILL

— Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs/Ways and Means —

Introduced by **Senators Pinsky, Augustine, Feldman, Guzzone, and Zucker**

Read and Examined by Proofreaders:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Proofreader.

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Proofreader.

Sealed with the Great Seal and presented to the Governor, for his approval this

\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock, \_\_\_\_\_ M.

\_\_\_\_\_  
President.

### CHAPTER \_\_\_\_\_

1 AN ACT concerning

#### 2 **Office of the Attorney General – Special Education Ombudsman**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Special Education Ombudsman in the Office of the  
4 Attorney General; providing for the purpose, appointment, and expenses of the  
5 Ombudsman; requiring the Attorney General, in cooperation with the Secretary of  
6 Budget and Management, to set minimum salary, qualifications, and experience  
7 standards for the Ombudsman and certain staff; providing for the duties of the  
8 Ombudsman; requiring the Ombudsman to treat communications as confidential  
9 and to reveal the details of certain communications only under certain  
10 circumstances; requiring the Ombudsman to arrange for a certain toll-free telephone  
11 number to provide certain assistance; requiring the Ombudsman, each year  
12 beginning on a certain date, to submit a certain report to certain committees of the  
13 General Assembly; requiring certain school personnel to provide the parents of a child  
14 with a disability with certain information about the Ombudsman and the toll-free  
15 telephone number; requiring that certain information be provided in the parent's

#### EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.

*Italics indicate opposite chamber/conference committee amendments.*



1 native language under certain circumstances; providing that a failure to provide  
 2 certain information does not constitute grounds for a certain due process complaint;  
 3 defining a certain term; and generally relating to the Special Education  
 4 Ombudsman.

5 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

6 Article – Education

7 Section 8–405(b)(1)

8 Annotated Code of Maryland

9 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

10 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

11 Article – Education

12 Section 8–405(b)(2) and (3)

13 Annotated Code of Maryland

14 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

15 BY adding to

16 Article – State Government

17 Section 6–501 through 6–506 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 5. Special  
 18 Education Ombudsman”

19 Annotated Code of Maryland

20 (2014 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

21 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
 22 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

23 **Article – Education**

24 8–405.

25 (b) (1) When a team of qualified professionals and the parents meet for the  
 26 purpose of discussing the identification, evaluation, educational program, or the provision  
 27 of a free appropriate public education of a child with a disability:

28 (i) The parents of the child shall be afforded the opportunity to  
 29 participate and shall be provided reasonable notice in advance of the meeting; and

30 (ii) Reasonable notice shall be at least 10 calendar days in advance  
 31 of the meeting, unless an expedited meeting is being conducted to:

32 1. Address disciplinary issues;

33 2. Determine the placement of the child with a disability not  
 34 currently receiving educational services; or

1                                    3. Meet other urgent needs of a child with a disability to  
 2 ensure the provision of a free appropriate public education.

3                                    (2) (i) 1. At the initial evaluation meeting, the parents of the child  
 4 shall be provided:

5                                    A. In plain language, an oral and written explanation of the  
 6 parents' rights and responsibilities in the individualized education program process and a  
 7 program procedural safeguards notice; [and]

8                                    B. Written information that the parents may use to contact  
 9 early intervention and special education family support services staff members within the  
 10 local school system and a brief description of the services provided by the staff members;  
 11 AND

12                                    C. WRITTEN INFORMATION ON THE SPECIAL  
 13 EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN AND TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER ESTABLISHED  
 14 UNDER TITLE 6, SUBTITLE 5 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE.

15                                    2. If a parent's native language is not English, the  
 16 information in subparagraph 1B AND C of this subparagraph shall be provided to the  
 17 parent in the parent's native language.

18                                    (ii) The parents may request the information provided under  
 19 subparagraph (i) of this paragraph at any subsequent meeting.

20                                    (iii) If a child who has an individualized education program  
 21 developed in another school system moves into a different local school system, that local  
 22 school system shall provide the information required under subparagraph (i) 1B AND C of  
 23 this paragraph at the time of the first written communication with the parents regarding  
 24 the child's individualized education program or special education services.

25                                    (iv) A local school system shall publish information that a parent may  
 26 use to contact early intervention and special education family support services staff members  
 27 within the local school system and a brief description of the services provided by the staff  
 28 members in a prominent place on the section of its website relating to special education  
 29 services.

30                                    (3) Failure to provide the information required under paragraph (2)(i) 1B  
 31 AND C of this subsection does not constitute grounds for a due process complaint under §  
 32 8-413 of this subtitle.

### 33                                    Article – State Government

### 34                                    SUBTITLE 5. SPECIAL EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN.

1 **6-501.**

2 IN THIS SUBTITLE, "OMBUDSMAN" MEANS THE SPECIAL EDUCATION  
3 OMBUDSMAN.

4 **6-502.**

5 (A) THERE IS A SPECIAL EDUCATION OMBUDSMAN IN THE OFFICE OF THE  
6 ATTORNEY GENERAL.

7 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE OMBUDSMAN IS TO SERVE AS A RESOURCE TO  
8 PROVIDE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT TO PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND EDUCATORS  
9 REGARDING SPECIAL EDUCATION RIGHTS AND SERVICES.

10 **6-503.**

11 (A) THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHALL APPOINT THE OMBUDSMAN.

12 (B) SALARIES OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND STAFF UNDER THE OMBUDSMAN  
13 AND EXPENSES RELATED TO THE OPERATION OF THE TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE  
14 NUMBER ESTABLISHED UNDER § 6-505 OF THIS SUBTITLE, RENT, EQUIPMENT,  
15 SUPPLIES, AND GENERAL OPERATIONS SHALL BE AS PROVIDED IN THE STATE  
16 BUDGET.

17 (C) IN COOPERATION WITH THE SECRETARY OF BUDGET AND  
18 MANAGEMENT, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SHALL SET MINIMUM SALARY,  
19 QUALIFICATIONS, AND EXPERIENCE STANDARDS FOR THE OMBUDSMAN AND ANY  
20 STAFF UNDER THE OMBUDSMAN.

21 **6-504.**

22 (A) THE OMBUDSMAN SHALL:

23 (1) SERVE AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION ON THE  
24 STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS, RULES, AND REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE  
25 EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FOR PARENTS, STUDENTS,  
26 EDUCATORS, AND INTERESTED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC;

27 (2) PROVIDE IMPARTIAL INFORMATION TO THE PARENTS OF  
28 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ON HOW TO NAVIGATE THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING  
29 SPECIAL EDUCATION EVALUATIONS AND SERVICES;

30 (3) PROVIDE IMPARTIAL INFORMATION TO PARENTS, PUBLIC  
31 SCHOOLS, AND EDUCATORS ON THE PROCEDURES FOR RESOLVING DISAGREEMENTS

1 AND DISPUTES REGARDING THE PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION OR  
2 DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN AGAINST STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES;

3 (4) EXPLAIN TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES THE  
4 RIGHTS OF PARENTS AND STUDENTS AND HOW THE PARENTS MAY AVAIL  
5 THEMSELVES OF THOSE RIGHTS;

6 (5) WORK NEUTRALLY AND OBJECTIVELY WITH ALL PERSONS TO  
7 ENSURE THAT THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM FUNCTIONS AS INTENDED;

8 (6) IDENTIFY ANY PATTERNS OF COMPLAINTS MADE BY PARENTS OF  
9 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND INFORM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF  
10 EDUCATION ABOUT ANY SUCH PATTERN; AND

11 (7) SERVE AS A GENERAL RESOURCE FOR DISABILITY-RELATED  
12 INFORMATION AND MAKE REFERRALS TO AVAILABLE STATE AND FEDERAL  
13 SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

14 (B) IN PERFORMING THE DUTIES ASSIGNED UNDER THIS SECTION, THE  
15 OMBUDSMAN SHALL TREAT ALL COMMUNICATIONS AS CONFIDENTIAL AND MAY  
16 REVEAL THE DETAILS OF ANY COMMUNICATION ONLY IF:

17 (1) NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE OMBUDSMAN'S DUTIES; AND

18 (2) DONE IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE STATE AND FEDERAL  
19 LAW.

20 **6-505.**

21 THE OMBUDSMAN SHALL ARRANGE FOR A TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBER,  
22 AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AS WELL AS OTHER APPROPRIATE LANGUAGES, TO ASSIST  
23 AN INDIVIDUAL SEEKING INFORMATION OR ADVICE ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION.

24 **6-506.**

25 ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2022, AND EACH JULY 1 THEREAFTER, THE  
26 OMBUDSMAN SHALL, CONSISTENT WITH FEDERAL AND STATE PRIVACY LAWS AND  
27 IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THIS ARTICLE, SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE  
28 SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE AND  
29 THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS THAT INCLUDES:

30 (1) THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF CALLS RECEIVED ON THE TOLL-FREE  
31 TELEPHONE NUMBER DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR;

1                   **(2) ANY PATTERNS OF COMPLAINTS FILED BY PARENTS IDENTIFIED**  
2 **UNDER § 6-504(A)(7) OF THIS SUBTITLE;**

3                   **(3) A SUMMARY OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE OMBUDSMAN**  
4 **DURING THE PREVIOUS YEAR; AND**

5                   **(4) ANY RECOMMENDATIONS THE OMBUDSMAN DETERMINES ARE**  
6 **APPROPRIATE AND NECESSARY CONCERNING THE STATE’S IMPLEMENTATION OF**  
7 **SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND PROCEDURES.**

8                   SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
9 1, 2020.

Approved:

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Governor.

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President of the Senate.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.