



SB266 EDUCATION - VOLUNTARY ETHICAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVOCATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

January 27, 2021

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports with amendments **SB266 Education - Voluntary Ethical Special Education Advocate Certificate Program**. This bill requires the State Department of Education (MSDE) to establish the Voluntary Ethical Special Education Advocate Certificate Program on or before July 1, 2022, for administration of a voluntary certificate program for ethical special education advocates. It specifies qualifications and application procedures for a certificate. It also requires MSDE to issue a certificate to a certain applicant and authorized an applicant to petition for judicial review of a decision of MSDE that relates to issuing or renewing a certificate.

AACPS believes that collaboration with families is essential to the success of all students. In fact, AACPS has the Partners for Success program to assist families of AACPS students receiving special education services. Partners for Success provides families with guidance, workshops, professional development, and supports. The program has been very successful in helping families.

Maryland does not currently have any quality control, certification, or training requirements for individuals who refer to themselves as advocates for parents of students with special needs. By establishing a Voluntary Ethical Special Education Advocate Certificate Program, this bill could ensure that special education advocates have the necessary training and certification to properly support parents. AACPS proposes that the bill be amended to include the following:

- a face-to-face component to the training, which would allow for greater opportunity for learning;
- clarification on how “good moral character” can be determined; and
- a mechanism for others to express concern to MSDE when a certificated advocate is not acting professionally or in the best interest of students and families.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report with the proposed amendments on SB266.