

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 263

(Senator Brooks, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Ways and Means

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

This bill requires local school systems to allow a dependent child of an active service member to apply for advance enrollment in a public school and specifies requirements for advance enrollment procedures. The Secretary of Veterans and Military Families, in consultation with specified entities, must publish and maintain information on (1) advance enrollment procedures; (2) the Purple Star Schools Program; (3) the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children; and (4) any assistance and services available to service members regarding advance enrollment. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Department of Veterans and Military Families can implement the bill with existing budgeted resources. Otherwise, the bill does not materially affect governmental operations or finances.

Local Effect: Local school systems can implement the bill's requirements with existing resources. Multiple school systems advise that they already have advance enrollment procedures that conform to the bill's requirements. No effect on revenues.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: To advance enroll a child, an active service member must provide to the local superintendent military orders showing that the service member will be stationed in

the State during the current or immediately following school year. The local superintendent must establish a remote registration process to allow for advance enrollment. The process may not charge a fee or require the active service member or other parent or guardian or the dependent child to physically appear at a location within the county to complete any part of the advance enrollment. Advance enrollment can be finalized within 10 days of the published arrival date if the service member provides the local school with (1) satisfactory evidence of the child's dependent status; (2) a copy of the military orders; and (3) proof of residence in the county.

The remote registration process must allow active service members or specified individuals to note whether the child has an individualized education program (IEP) or a 504 plan in the sending state. If the child has an IEP or 504 plan, the local school board must ensure, as specified, that the child receives an appropriate education without undue delay including, if appropriate, education under an IEP or in accordance with a 504 plan.

A dependent child of an active service member who uses advance enrollment must have access to academic courses and programs, including extracurricular activities and athletic and social programs, in the same manner as other students enrolled in the school.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a dependent child of an active service member who has used advance enrollment may remain enrolled in the school until the end of the current school year, even if the child no longer meets the school's residency requirements.

Current Law: An active service member is defined as an individual who is (1) an active duty member of the uniformed services or (2) serving in a reserve component of the uniformed services on active duty orders.

Under federal law, "uniformed services" means, the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Public Health Service. A "reserve component" means the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, or the Reserve Corps of the Public Health Service.

A local superintendent must allow a dependent child of an active service member who is relocating to the State on military orders and is not residing in the county during the enrollment period to apply for enrollment in the same manner and at the same time as residents of the county. Within 10 days of the published arrival date on the service member's military orders, the service member must provide the school with (1) satisfactory evidence of the child's dependent status; (2) a copy of the military orders; and (3) proof of residence in the county. The service member may use specified addresses (including temporary military housing) as proof of residence.

Purple Star Schools Program

Chapters 65 and 66 of 2022 established the Purple Star Schools Program to recognize public schools that provide strong services and support for military-connected students and their families when, as a result of official orders, a military-connected student transfers schools. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) administers the program. To qualify as a Purple Star School, a public school must meet criteria adopted by MSDE, which must, at a minimum, require a school to designate a staff liaison to perform specified duties, create an easily accessible web page with pertinent resources, maintain a transition program led by students, and offer professional development for staff on issues related to military-connected students transferring to new schools.

Interstate Compact

Since 2010, Maryland has been a member of the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, which addresses enrollment of dependents of members of the uniformed services when the service member is under active orders. The purpose of the Compact is to remove barriers to educational success imposed on children of military families because of frequent moves and deployment by their parents. Among other things, it seeks to (1) facilitate the timely enrollment of children of military families and (2) facilitate the student placement process.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 596 and SB 601 of 2025.

Designated Cross File: HB 102 (Delegate Patterson) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland School for the Deaf; Department of Veterans and Military Families; Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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