

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6641

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As of January 21, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to the special education ombudsman.

**Brief Description:** Regarding the special education ombudsman.

**Sponsors:** Senators Pflug and Kline.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education: 1/25/06.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING, K-12 & HIGHER EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** Federal and state law requires school districts to conduct evaluations of students who may have a disability and who by reason of that disability need special education and related services. The rules of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) require that such an evaluation will be conducted by a group of qualified professionals knowledgeable about the suspected areas of disabilities. Medical evaluations at the expense of the school district must be obtained if the group of qualified professionals suspects a health problem that may affect the students' eligibility for special education and related services.

The 2005-07 biennial budget appropriated funding and created a Special Education Ombudsman Program within the office of the SPI. The stated purpose of the program is to provide support to parents, guardians, educators, and students with disabilities, including providing information on state laws and rules, access to training and support, technical information services, and mediation services. Additionally, the ombudsman program must provide data information and recommendations to the SPI, school districts, educational service districts, state need projects, and the parent and teacher information center.

**Summary of Bill:** The intent section provides that special education could be even more helpful to students with disabilities if educators received help from experts outside of education.

The Special Education Ombudsman must form a state team or regional teams of experts to assist school districts who request help with evaluations or re-evaluations of students and the development of individualized education programs for students receiving special education. The ombudsman's team must include qualified physicians and psychologists who can identify medical and psychological services that the student will need.

School districts may request assistance from the ombudsman for any student evaluation or re-evaluation but districts must request assistance if it appears that the student may need medical or psychological services. The office of the SPI must make rules to implement this

bill but the rules must require only minimal paperwork for school districts to access the ombudsman's team of experts.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 20, 2006.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.