
Education Committee

SSB 5376

Brief Description: Promoting awareness of the governor's office of the education ombuds.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, C., Wellman, Conway, Das, Hunt, Kuderer, Liias, Nobles and Saldaña).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires public schools to take specified actions to notify students, families, and employees about the services available through the Office of the Education Ombuds.
- Directs the Office of the Education Ombuds to develop a template of the required notification information and to translate the template into Spanish and other languages as resources allow.

Hearing Date: 3/12/21

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

In 2006, the Office of the Education Ombuds was created within the Office of the Governor to provide information to parents, students, and others regarding their rights and responsibilities with respect to the state's public elementary and secondary education system, and to advocate on behalf of elementary and secondary students. It is the lead agency for providing resources to families about public school antiharassment policies and strategies. All matters are treated as confidential by the Education Ombuds, except as necessary to perform the duties of the office.

The Office of the Education Ombuds describes its role as: listening to concerns and addressing questions about the public education system; using informal conflict resolution tools to support

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collaborative problem-solving and promote education justice; providing coaching, facilitation, training about family and community engagement, and systems advocacy; and collecting data and identifying trends to guide its education policy recommendations.

The Education Ombuds produces an annual report describing the work of the office and making recommendations to increase family and community involvement in public education and to improve educational opportunities for all students.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

At least annually, public schools must notify parents or guardians; students, including students in residential schools, detention facilities, and adult correctional facilities; and school employees about the services available through the Office of the Education Ombuds.

Beginning September 1, 2021, each public school must perform either of the following actions:

1. include a link on its website to the Education Ombuds website with a description of the services provided by the Office of the Education Ombuds; or
2. provide a description of the services provided by the Office of the Education Ombuds and the contact information for the Education Ombuds in existing materials that are shared annually with families, students, and school employees, such as welcome packets, orientation guides, and newsletters.

Public schools are encouraged to perform both of these actions.

Beginning September 1, 2021, the Education Ombuds must annually develop and make available a template of the required notification information. The Education Ombuds must also translate this template into Spanish and include other languages as resources allow.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.