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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5376**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

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

AN ACT Relating to promoting awareness of the governor's office of the education ombuds; adding a new section to chapter 28A.600 RCW; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that the office of the education ombuds within the office of the governor was established by the legislature in 2006 to reduce educational opportunity gaps by supporting families, students, educators, and communities in understanding the K-12 school system and resolving concerns collaboratively. The legislature recognizes that it placed the education ombuds within the office of the governor to ensure independence and impartiality.

(2) The legislature recognizes that the education ombuds provides services including:

(a) Informing students, parents or guardians, employees, and members of the public about the state's public elementary and secondary education system;

(b) Identifying obstacles and recommending strategies to help students and community members to participate effectively in schools;

(c) Identifying and recommending strategies for improving student success;

(d) Referring individuals and families to appropriate resources, agencies, or departments;

(e) Facilitating the resolution of informal complaints made by parents and students with regard to the state's public elementary and secondary education system; and

(f) Serving as the lead agency to provide resources and tools to parents and families about public school antiharassment policies and strategies.

(3) The legislature intends for public schools to annually notify parents or guardians, students, and school employees about these services.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.600 RCW to read as follows:

(1) 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 within the office of the governor established under chapter 43.06B RCW.

(2)(a) Beginning September 1, 2021, each public school must:

(i) Include a link on its website to the education ombuds website with a description of the services provided under chapter 43.06B RCW; or

(ii) Provide a description of the services provided under chapter 43.06B RCW 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.

(b) Public schools are encouraged to comply with both (a)(i) and (ii) of this subsection (2).

(3) Beginning September 1, 2021, the education ombuds must annually develop and make a template of the notification information required in this section available upon request. The education ombuds must translate this template into Spanish and include other languages as resources allow.

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