

Friis, John

From: Josef Graham [josefgr@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2009 8:43 PM
To: Friis, John
Subject: Testimony - S.B. No. 1142, Session Year 2009
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March 23, 2009

Education Committee

Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Attention: Senator Thomas P. Gaffey and Representative Andrew M. Fleischmann

Re: Raised S.B. No. 1142, Session Year 2009

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and the Education Committee Members,

Please accept this letter as testimony for my opposition to S.B. No. 1142:

AN ACT CONCERNING RELIEF OF STATE MANDATES ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

To delay the implementation of the in-school suspension mandate until July 1, 2011; to change the date in which a teacher is notified that his or her contract will not be renewed from April first to May first; to require that providers of school readiness programs submit space allotment reports every other month; to establish that the burden of proof lies with the party requesting a special education hearing; to provide that a local or regional board of education's commitment to provide special education to a child terminates upon the child's twenty-first birthday; and to eliminate certain reporting requirements on local and regional boards of education.

3/23/2009

I am writing to you as a Connecticut Public School teacher with more than 30 years experience as well as a parent of a Special Needs child. I request that you not to change the current regulations in Connecticut regarding Suspensions, Burden of Proof or the Guidelines for "aging out" of Special Education Services.

Sending a student out of school for a suspension serves neither the school, the student, nor the family. Schools need to be accountable and have appropriate education and behavioral plans in place. There is clearly something wrong if a student's behavior escalates to the point where he or she is not able to be present in the very institution that is charged with his or her care and well being. I can not see any value in delaying the mandate that discipline be handled "in-house".

Secondly, it is extraordinarily difficult to prove that a student has not been afforded an Appropriate Education. To place the Burden of Proof on the Special Needs' family would most likely be a tremendous financial cost savings for Local Boards of Education. The true cost, however, would be the travesty of exploiting our most vulnerable population and their families. Few families would have the energy or ability to afford the legal fees to challenge the Board's actions, even if there were violations of the most egregious nature.

Finally, Special Education services must not terminate upon the child's twenty-first birthday. Most transition programs run from September to June. Planning would be impossible if each student was dropped from these programs at any point in the year, dependent on their birthdays. I have witnessed the devastation caused by the down time experienced by my son when he was "between programs". Many of these children are not intrinsically motivated and only succeed within the structured environment of an educational/vocational program.

I implore you not to change the current regulations in Connecticut relating to Suspensions, Burden of Proof or when Special Education services end.

Respectfully Yours,

Josef A Graham

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