



Connecticut Down Syndrome Congress
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Testimony of

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to the Education Committee
March 23, 2009

Good afternoon, members of the committee.

My name is Walter Glomb. I am a parent of a student who receives special education services in Connecticut. I am also the president of the Connecticut Down Syndrome Congress and the president elect of the Connecticut Coalition for Inclusive Education. I am here to speak on behalf of parents of students who have Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities **AGAINST** Sections 4 and 5 of raised Bill No. 1142, ***AN ACT CONCERNING RELIEF OF STATE MANDATES ON SCHOOL DISTRICTS.***

Section 4 places an unfair burden on parents whose children are denied a free and appropriate public education by local school districts. Hearings by the State Department of Education are the first best means by which parents can secure the civil rights of their children when their local districts refuse to provide essential educational services.

In these hearings, school districts are usually represented one of our state's large law firms who are paid by the district's insurance company - while parents often appear pro se when they cannot find the funds to hire a private attorney. Placing an additional burden on the parents in these circumstances is unfair and unnecessary. The courts and the Constitution already indicate where the burden of proof lies. There is no need for the legislature to further complicate this issue and we strongly object to any move designed to make this process even more difficult for families.

Section 5 would terminate special education services to students upon a student's twenty-first birthday regardless of when that birthday falls in the academic calendar. Currently, school districts in Connecticut allow students to complete the academic year in which they reach age twenty-one.

Like other students, those receiving special education plan their transition to the workforce around the academic year – just as many employers plan their recruitment on the academic calendar. Terminating the public education of students with special needs before the end of the academic year would create considerable hardship for those who are receiving school-to-work transition supports in internship or vocational training programs.

Furthermore, many students who receive special education services are in the middle of their senior year of high school when they reach their twenty-first birthday so the proposed change to the general statutes would deprive them of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences surrounding high-school graduation.

Please do not throw these students out of school before the end of the academic year.

Please do NOT change the language of the general statutes as proposed in Section 5 of Raised Bill 1142.

Please do NOT give this bill a favorable report.

Thank you.