

Hayes, Katherine

From: Amanda Tellier [telliera@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2009 10:25 AM
To: Friis, John
Subject: Opposition of Raised Bill 1142, Sections 4 & 5

March 23, 2009

re: Opposition to Raised Bill 1143, Sections 4 & 5

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishmann, and members of the Education Committee:

I am strongly opposed to the changes in HB 1143, Sections 4 & 5 which would greatly disadvantage children with disabilities.

Section 4 proposes shifting the burden of proof in special education due process hearings from the school district to the party requesting the hearing. This would put families at a disadvantage since school districts already possess the information and expertise regarding a child's IEP. School districts should be held accountable for assuring a child's IEP is appropriate to provide FAPE regardless of who brings forward a due process hearing. Additionally, if school districts do not have the burden of proof, they will be less inclined to cooperate with parents to negotiate an appropriate program and services for the child. Districts may opt to restrict services and "draw a line in the sand" requiring parents no option but to pursue due process knowing that the parent will have the burden of proof. This will be especially true as school budgets get tighter and tighter. The result will be an increase in due process hearings for those families who can afford it or a decrease in quality education for those who cannot. Either is unacceptable.

I also oppose Section 5 of this bill. The IDEA gives states the authority to determine when a child is no longer age eligible for special education after graduation or his 21st birthday. Connecticut was prudent by opting to extend services to the end of the school year that a child turns 21. This allows for continuity of services and ease of transition to other state programs for individuals with disabilities. Cutting off a child's services at his birthday will leave many disadvantaged young adults and families with not support. This is also unacceptable and irresponsible.

Please support our children with disabilities by not putting families at a disadvantage with their school districts and assure they have access to appropriate services. Please oppose Sections 4 and 5 of Raised HB 1143.

Thank you,

Amanda Tellier
Parent of a child with autism &
resident of Bristol, CT

3/23/2009