

Friis, John

From: Judey Yudkin [judeyyudkin@optonline.net]
Sent: Sunday, March 22, 2009 4:12 PM
To: Friis, John
Subject: Testimony

March 23, 2009

Education Committee

Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Attention: Sen. Thomas P. Gaffey and Rep. Andrew M. Fleischmann

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

Dear Sen. Gaffey, Rep. 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.

This bill would take one giant step backwards toward the rights of children with Special needs. Currently, the rights of these children in the public school systems are often ignored and trampled upon. This is due to the system already being set up in a way that makes it extremely difficult and costly for parents to prove that the school is failing to provide a free and appropriate public education. If the changes that are being proposed in this Act, become law, it would make the already difficult task parents have of overseeing their children's rights almost impossible.

3/23/2009

I have an 8 year old child with Autism. I had to battle the school system for three years over not providing my child FAPE. It was costly, exhausting and mentally the most difficult thing I have ever went through in my life. After spending, \$10,000 on setting up the proof we needed to show that the school was failing to provide our son FAPE, we could not afford what was needed to go to a due process hearing and have a hope of a "fair" hearing. I eventually moved; because, I could no longer watch my son deteriorate in front of my very eyes due to a school systems failure to provide a program that was appropriate for my son. That decision was the best decision I made, because, this school actually cared to educate my child and provide him FAPE. My son went from a 6 year old boy who was removed from his classroom every week, came home from school crying every week, and needing to physically be dragged into school on many occasions by the staff because in his words "he was afraid to." I will never forget watching my son being grabbed kicking and screaming and dragged into school, crying hysterically and looking at my face begging me to stop them from doing this. He now is 8 and after only three months at his new school the staff could not believe my son had any of the problems he had at the previous school because under their care he showed none of those behaviors. In fact, they said he is one of their best students and that they love him and he looks forward to school every day and comes home every day after school telling me all about his day. It is amazing what happens when you provide an appropriate education to a child.

I have 7 friends, who's special needs children also were in the same school system my son originally attended. They had the money to fight for their child's rights. It cost them from \$50,000 to \$80,000 to pay for the attorney and the specialists testimony at the due process hearing. That was just for one year. Even when they have a decision in their favor they still have to turn around and do it all over again, once the time period of the decision has lapsed, which is usually one to three years. Some school system's ignore the rights of these children because they know that most families can not afford to go to due process. To then change this already flawed system to one in which the burden of proof lies with the party requesting the special education hearing (which is almost always the parents) would just be insuring that the school system's have free reign over failing to provide our children what they are entitled to under the law.

I implore you to consider how expensive and difficult it already is for parent's to ensure their special needs child's rights are being protected. Please, do not back this Act. To do so, would have devastating affects on our ability to protect our children.

Thank your for taking time to consider my testimony.

Sincerely,

Judey Yudkin

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3/23/2009