

Hayes, Katherine

From: maryw9852@comcast.net
Sent: Monday, March 23, 2009 11:08 AM
To: Friis, John
Subject: RAISED BILL 1142

Dear Mr. Fris

I am writing to you in regards to RAISED BILL 1142. It has been brought to my attention that this Bill includes changes to CT law that would adversely affect my children. I have 2 children with Special Needs, they attend Danbury Public Schools and are a part of the Special Education program for the State of Connecticut. Please do not allow this Bill to pass without considering changes to the following areas.

Within the body of the proposed legislation regarding in-school suspensions (Raised Bill SB 1142), two devastating changes to CT special education law are included:

1. It would shift the burden of proof in Due Process Hearings to the party who brought the Hearing. Functionally, this shifts the burden of proof from school districts, who currently are required to prove that they offered an appropriate special education program in CT, to parents, who bring the vast majority of the Hearings. This will mean that many more cases will be lost by parents, and that Due Process will become even harder than it already is, especially for indigent families who can not afford expert witnesses or attorneys.
2. Currently, students with special education IEPs are entitled to services in CT until they either graduate from high school OR through the **school year** of their 21st birthday. This is essential for individuals with significant needs. The new language would propose to cease all services on a student's 21st birthday. Therefore, even if a student's birthday was September 5th, and now they would receive services through that whole school year, by this new law they would stop getting all services on September 6th. Importantly, there is no proposal to make up for the gap in services through any adult services agencies! This will leave many students with autism spectrum disorders or other developmental disabilities "on their own" at 21.

Sincerely,

Mary Wanser

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