

Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Gaffey and members of the Education Committee,

I would like to address issues with raised Bill 5425 "An Act Concerning Special Education."

There is in section 3 (d)(1) the following statement " In making a determination as to the issues in dispute, the hearing officer or board shall review the evidence presented in the hearing with the burden of proof on the party requesting the hearing."

This statement would make the burden of proof fall on the parents. As an Arc representative I do not feel this would be beneficial to any of the families or the children involved in special education.

The PPT process can be very intimidating to families. I know my aunt who was an Executive Director of a non profit and a very forceful person to contend with was very fearful and intimidated in this process when she attended for her daughter who had severe disabilities and behavioral issues.

When you have a room full of titled professionals that are powerfully stating that they know what is best for your child it is very overwhelming to parents. These professionals have time and training, and education to present very powerful persuasive arguments that most parents do not have the training or the education to compete with. It is a difficult process for parents to participate in to begin with but then to be charged with obtaining and possibly paying for expensive examinations and/or expert opinion seems very burdensome.

It will not be in the best interest of the child and could possibly be very detrimental in the long run. Failure to provide appropriate special education supports will cause a greater issue in the regular classrooms and possibly further disruption for all students. Please consider amending this bill to remove the burden of proof from the parents. Thank you for keeping the best interest of children with disabilities in the forefront of your decisions.

Sincerely,

Pamela Fields
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