

I am writing in response to sections 2 and 3 of Raised Bill No. 5425.

Section 2, which requires school districts hire qualified people to provide behavior analysis for our children, is an important addition that I fully support.

More importantly, however, and the true reason for this email, is the detrimental position of Section 3. Currently, Connecticut law requires that school districts prove that they offered a child with disabilities an appropriate program if the dispute proceeds to a Due Process Hearing. Section 3 of this Bill proposes changing this law, and placing the burden of proof with the party who asked for the hearing, which in almost all cases is the Parent. This would be a terrible mistake and would surely allow for even less accountability by our CT schools than exists already. CT schools are already struggling to deliver FAPE to our Special Education students and parents are left with little recourse. To remove the burden of proof from the district would surely result in even less accountability by our educators and district administrators in an already struggling system. It is disappointing to see how hard parents have to fight in CT to get appropriate services for their children. The language of Section 3 is further evidence of how far this state has to come in the area of special education and how great the lack of support is for our families. Frankly, I am appalled that such a suggestion was even made.

Stephanie Smith
Mother of 7 year old with Autism