

Hello our names are Ernie and Laurie Cantwell. We are the proud parents of a four-year old child with special needs. We are very much opposed to the Raised House Bill Number 5425. It does not make any fiscal or ethical sense to change the burden of proof requirements in regards to special education from the school to the parents.

In order for a child to have a chance to receive a "free and appropriate public education" it is essential for the child to have the proper services provided for them. If the burden of proof is passed on to the parents there can be no question that any special needs child from a low-income family will face a greater possibility of not receiving all the proper services. Only families that have the money to pay for an attorney will have anywhere near a fair chance on the tilted playing field to properly advocate for their children.

If the burden of proof is on the parent then it will be near impossible for our family to represent themselves in the hearing process. The stresses of having a child with special needs are great both personally and financially on a family. This law will exponentially increase both the personal and financial stress on families that have children with special needs.

We implore you to vote down Raised House Bill Number 5425. Parents of children with special needs already carry an ample burden. This bill has the potential to make that burden overwhelming for the parents, which will in the end have a negative impact on the personal and financial well-being of these families.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ernie and Laurie Cantwell

22 Oxford Lane

Cromwell, CT 06416