

March 8, 2010

**Testimony before Committee on Education**  
**Re: H.B. #5425, "An Act Concerning Special Education "**

by

**Leslie Simoes, Assistant Executive Director/The Arc of Connecticut**

Good afternoon Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleishmann, and Members of the Education Committee. I am Leslie Simoes, the Assistant Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, a 58-year-old statewide advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have 23 local chapters that provide supports, services, and advocacy throughout Connecticut.

I am here today to testify against of **House Bill #5425, "An Act Concerning Special Education"** particularly Section 3 subsection (d) (1) where it is proposing the change, " 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 proposed change creates significant burdens to families with students with disabilities – as well as simply being unkind and unfair.

Parents already have enough on their plates already. Parents with children who have intellectual disabilities have even more challenges to navigate on a daily basis. By having to worry about and collect all the necessary paperwork for a situation that is already cumbersome and difficult seems ridiculous. School districts readily have the required documentation on hand or at least could obtain faster and with fewer difficulties than a parent.

Additionally, children with disabilities do not grow-up in a vacuum. By interacting with their non-disabled peers in a common and normal setting, such as school, it breaks down the barriers of fear and misunderstanding. The future policy-makers learn that children with disabilities are *not* that different from themselves after all.

The Arc of Connecticut strongly believes that by changing the language in this statute you are placing undue and unnecessary burdens on parents and families.

We urge this Committee to vote against this change outlined in HB #5425.