

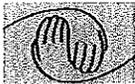
**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY IN  
SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL 1038, AN ACT CONCERNING  
INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**February 28, 2011**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a non-profit legal organization affiliated with the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy. Through our TeamChild Juvenile Justice Project and Truancy Court Prevention Project, the Center represents hundreds of children in securing appropriate educational programming and improving academic outcomes. We support Raised Bill No. 1038, *An Act Concerning Individualized Education Programs*, for the following three reasons:

**I. Allowing Parents to Review the Evaluation Before the PPT Meeting Will Increase Meaningful Parental Participation**

Giving parents the opportunity to review the assessments and evaluations conducted by the school district at least five days in advance of an initial planning and placement team ("PPT") meeting will allow parents to fully analyze the evaluation's results and recommendations, which form the basis for eligibility determinations and student programming. Although parents are equal members of the PPT, they are at a disadvantage when a school district presents them with an evaluation for the first time at the initial PPT meeting. Under this scenario, parents are expected to fully comprehend the often complex assessment results in a short period of time or, alternatively, blindly accept the school district's conclusions about the evaluation. Allowing parents time to digest the information contained in an evaluation report before the initial PPT meeting will allow parents to be better prepared for the initial PPT meeting and to participate in the IEP process more meaningfully.



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**II. Providing Parents the Evaluation Before the PPT Meeting Will Allow Parents to Seek Appropriate and Necessary Assistance and Support**

Requiring advanced notice also gives parents the opportunity to seek assistance and support from others to help them interpret the results of the evaluations and better advocate for the needs of

their child. The special education process can be daunting for parents, especially for those who may be coming to the realization for the first time that their son or daughter may have a disability. This Bill will make it easier for parents to seek help in navigating the special education process so that they can make more informed decisions about their child's education.

For example, we represented a parent regarding her son's continued eligibility for special education. The school repeatedly informed us that it was their policy to provide the evaluation at the scheduled PPT meeting, denying the parent the opportunity to review that evaluation with her representative prior to the PPT meeting. Only after persistent requests did the school finally relent and provide a copy of the evaluation before the PPT meeting. If it took our office repeated requests before the school provided the evaluation, one can only imagine how difficult it would be for a parent, often unfamiliar with special education law and process, to obtain an evaluation. A policy refusing to give parents their child's evaluation to review before a PPT meeting is a barrier to parental participation in the special education process and this Bill provides a needed remedy.

### **III. Requiring Regular Education Teachers to Be Trained in the Implementation of IEPs Will Help Ensure that Students Will Receive an Appropriate Education**

Since regular education teachers often bear the responsibility of implementing students' IEPs, training these teachers in how to properly develop and implement IEPs will improve the educational services provided to disabled students.

### **Raised Bill 1038 Should Be Amended to Allow Parents to Receive All Evaluations in Advance of any PPT Meeting**

As currently written, Section 1 needlessly limits the requirement of school districts to provide assessments and evaluations to parents at least five days before the *initial* PPT meeting to determine a student's eligibility for special education and related services. Because the IDEA requires that school districts reevaluate special education students every three years and or when a student's lack of progress indicates a need for reevaluation, parents should have the right to review all evaluations at least five days in advance of any PPT meeting just as they would for an initial PPT meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



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