

Dear Mrs. Janowski,

As a Special Education Teacher candidate and a parent of a child with a Learning Disability, I would like to ask that you please support Bill HB 5601, which was raised by the Education Committee.

The purpose of this Bill is to prevent a delay in the evaluation of children suspected of having a disability as well as the identification of such children requiring special education. This is a goal I endorse and hope you will champion as well. However, it is my understanding that this bill, which was formerly known as H.B. 5683, removes any reference to SRBI, Connecticut's version of Response to Intervention, which is now used to identify and determine eligibility for special education services for children with learning disabilities. It is crucial that the bill be amended to require that each local and regional school board of education shall ensure that evaluations and determinations of eligibility are carried out promptly and are not delayed while a child undergoes interventions under the Connecticut response to intervention program. Some school districts are interpreting the new regulations as requiring that students who are suspected of having a Learning Disability go through the entire 3-tiered SRBI process before being evaluated for Learning Disabilities. This can cause a child to wait upwards of an entire school year before being evaluated and receiving appropriate services, causing the child to fall even further behind academically. I can attest through personal experience with my own daughter and the Vernon Public School System's refusal to provide special education services for her despite her having been identified as a child with a learning disability under the old regulations several years ago that such delays have a severe negative impact on a child's learning, and impact that will affect them for the rest of their academic career. The intent of Response to Intervention under IDEA 2004 was for struggling students to receive more help sooner and to eliminate any question of inadequate instruction prior to evaluating a child, NOT to add unnecessary delay to what can already be a frustrating process for both the child and his or her family.

Sincerely,

Catherine Jeffers 19 Pillsbury Hill, Vernon