

I appreciate the opportunity to provide my written testimony on HB5552: An Act Concerning Special Education. My name is Catherine Savage, I reside in Darien Connecticut and I am the parent of two children with disabilities. I am providing this as written testimony for the record.

I oppose HB5552: An Act Concerning Special Education because it would protract the hearing process and delay relief from getting to the disabled child. The costs to Parents of filing for due process are already daunting and exorbitant. And while circumstances are individualized, there is a sole reason that the vast majority of parents are compelled to file for due process.... to protect their child with disabilities.

This bill will harm children with disabilities because delay is the something our children cannot afford. The disabled child is supposed to be receiving intensive specialized services designed to catch up and ultimately attempt to close the achievement gap with their general education peers.

If parents file for due process, then there should be a presumption and grave concern that there are such serious suspected problems for the disabled student that they may not be receiving an appropriate education. I expect this to be the primary focus of any legislation. Given the dismal educational outcomes for special education students, any new Legislation should be designed to hold school districts to a more rigorous standard of accountability for educating their population of children with disabilities.

The only outcome of this Bill would be to add time to the process for families. An improperly implemented IEP or placement has the very real danger of causing long term educational delays, emotional and even physical damage to the child.

The choice to file for due process is a last resort for parents because all other attempts at resolution have failed them. Prior to a due process hearing, there are already ample opportunities for schools and parents to come to a mediated solution.

The only conclusion that can be made regarding HB5552 is that this bill is intended to cost families more financially and limit their ability to access a timely due process hearing. And the victims will be all the students with disabilities who would have to wait even longer to get a Free and Appropriate Education if HB5552 was to be passed.

Please vote no on HB:5552 and support all families who have children with disabilities in Connecticut.

Sincerely,
Catherine Savage