

March 7, 2016

RE: In opposition of House Bill 5552

My name is Katrina Dyer and I am a concerned citizen from Bristol, CT.

I am writing you to ask you to oppose HB 5552, a proposed Bill entitled 'An Act Concerning Special Education'.

It adds yet another layer of administrative bureaucracy that special-needs families like mine must negotiate while making sure that my daughter is able to get the support and accommodations she needs in order to receive the free appropriate public education to which she is legally entitled.

It should be pointed out that there is already a mediation process whereby the parties to any dispute might attempt to reach an amicable and mutually agreeable solution to their problems.

This language would tack-on additional legal costs and rack-up lost wages as financially strapped, special needs parents like us have to manage on an already exhausting schedule.

Most importantly, it further delays the process and will undoubtedly leave children in classrooms that do not meet their needs even longer than the current process does; therefore denying their real access to the proper education that they are guaranteed and entitled to under United States Federal Law. While this time and idea may seem reasonable to some lawmakers or anyone who hasn't had a child languishing in an inappropriate setting, as my child did, we know how invaluable this time truly is. Every day in the wrong setting chips away at their potential and self esteem, sets them up for failure every day and impedes their access to a free and appropriate education that fits their needs.

I am now unemployed because the process to get my child into an appropriate school setting took far too long with too many phone calls to my employer, from her school, to force me to pick up my child because they couldn't get through the day with her. I was given the choice to resign or be fired solely because school called on a daily basis to dismiss her while also insisting that they could handle her various needs as well as provide a real education. They could not. Sadly, this is a very common occurrence for families in the special education community. I personally have a difficult time knowing that so many parents are being forced out of work due to constant calls to pick up our children yet our children's education is fair and "free." Free for whom? Not us. Yes, I understand what the "free" in FAPE actually means but this is the reality for so many of us. Too many of us.

For these reasons, I ask that you please vote "no" on HB 5552 (and similar variations thereof should they arise).

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this letter.

Respectfully,
Katrina Dyer
77th District
Bristol, CT