

I am writing to you today to raise my concerns regarding Raised H.B. 5307 An Act Prohibiting the Unreasonable Delay of Enrolling a Child in Kindergarten. My name is Rebecca DiMauro and my husband and I reside in Cromwell and have a 4 year old daughter with special needs. She is currently enrolled in the Pre-K special education program at Edna C. Stevens School. Currently, how the Connecticut General Statutes under Section 10-184 are written, since my daughter already has an IEP and is enrolled in the public school, if I choose to exercise my right as her parent and not enroll her in kindergarten next year she will not be eligible to continue to receive special education and related services because the public school will not re-enroll her. Personally, as a mother of a child with special needs this is very frustrating considering if my child was "typical" I could exercise my right and not send her until she was six or seven. My child already has significant developmental delays and could benefit greatly from another year in pre-school from a cognitive, social and emotional level. Furthermore, she has a late September birthday which in turn makes her one of the youngest children in the classroom. The current statute does not allow me as a parent of a special needs child to retain her in public pre-school. My only options, if I don't enroll her in kindergarten, are to home school her or put her in a private school, both options are not feasible considering she would not be receiving the services she needs and would normally be receiving if she was in public school. This statute seems to be counterintuitive for our children with special needs. Speaking for myself, as well as other parents of special needs children, raising a child with special needs is a monumental task in and of itself and should not be further complicated with statutes that don't support our children educationally.

Although the new bill RHB-5307 seems to try to address some of the concerns referenced above, it still is lacking in clarity for our children with special needs. In the new revised bill, it states, as a parent I can exercise my right not to enroll my child in kindergarten if my child has a developmental delay, however, it does not clearly outline exactly what this means for my child. The bill needs to clearly state that my child will be allowed to stay enrolled in the public school district in the Pre-K program and continue with her IEP program receiving her appropriate supports and interventions.

Again, as a mother of a special needs child I urge all of you to allow us as parents, who know our children the best, especially those with disabilities, the right to choose what we feel socially, emotionally, and cognitively is the appropriate next educational step for our children. This current bill unfairly limits us to retain our children in Pre-K and certainly does not look out for the best interest of our children.

I would like to thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I appreciate your sense of urgency around the importance of this bill and what it means to our children with special needs and their future.

Sincerely,

Rebecca DiMauro

RHB-5307 An Act Prohibiting the Unreasonable Delay of Enrolling a Child in Kindergarten

The parent or person having control of a child five years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is six years of age and the parent or person having control of a child six years of age shall [have the option of not sending the] not be required to send the child to school until the child is seven years of age if (1) a physician certifies that the child should not attend school until age seven, or (2) the child has been identified as having a developmental delay, as defined in section 10-76a. The parent or person shall exercise such option by personally appearing at the school district office and signing an option form. The school district shall provide the parent or person with information on the educational opportunities available in the school system.

Section 10-184- Current CT General Statute

If your child is of kindergarten age, you have the right under Section 10-184 of the Connecticut General Statutes not to enroll your child in kindergarten. Specifically, Section 10-184 of the Connecticut General Statutes states: “the parent or person having control of a child five years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is six years of age and the parent or personal having control of a child six years of age shall have the option of not sending the child to school until the child is seven years of age. The parent or person shall exercise such option by personally appearing at the school district office and signing an option form. The school district shall provide the parent or person with information on the educational opportunities available in the school system.” Preschool-age children with an individualized education program (IEP) are already enrolled in the public school and are receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Therefore, five and or six year old children with an IEP whose parents exercise their option of not enrolling their child in kindergarten at their public school, will not be eligible to continue to receive special education and related services because the child is no longer enrolled in a public school.