

Marcelino, Pamela

From: John Bestor <mmjjbbtej@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2017 8:01 AM
To: INSTestimony
Cc: zRepresentative Lezlye Zupkus; Rep. Bolinsky, Mitch
Subject: Serious concerns about Proposed SB # 542

To the Members of the Insurance & Real Estate Committee:

My name is John Bestor; I am writing to express utmost concern that Proposed S.B.# 542 *An Act Establishing the Connecticut Special Education Predictable Cost Cooperative* represents a serious threat to over forty years of special education programming decisions which are - by law - supposed to be determined through a Planning & Placement Team process that includes both parents and teachers who know the student's educational needs best. Having worked as a school psychologist for forty-one years in a CT public school district, I fully understand that the special education decision-making process can be contentious at times, but - as it plays out today - the majority of instructional programming determinations for special needs students are worked out collaboratively and agreement is reached. To replace that decision-making process with a formulaic quota system is contrary to federal law as it has been carried out under IDEA.

I caution that it is highly suspect that a proposal put forth by Governor Malloy's legislative allies and the many privatization advocates that have so clearly influenced state education budgetary initiatives. The 2016 report "An Answer to Connecticut's Special Education Funding Challenges" written by the CT School Finance Project which is led by former CCER employees looks highly professional, but the "devil is always in the details" and the unintended consequences of these proposed funding quotas will decrease instructional choices and frustrate both teachers and parents who are striving to educate our most vulnerable learners. I suspect that parents with financial means will find ways to supplement programming for their children, while parents with fewer economic options will simply have to accept whatever is offered for their child with special needs.

I urge you, as representatives of these children and families, fully understand how any proposed changes in special education funding will actually be played out in the real world of special education decision-making.

Sincerely,

John Bestor
Cheshire, CT