

I grew up in Hamden, across the street from Hindinger Farm. I went to the YMCA for nursery school, West Woods for elementary school, bussed from Bear Path, to the old Hamden Middle School, and graduated from Hamden High School in 1994. I moved to NYC for college, and stayed for 20 years. I now have a PhD, a tenured faculty position, and I'm in the end stages of completing my first book. While living in the city, I came back every month to visit my family and friends and to hike Sleeping Giant. I got married in and baptized my son at Dunbar United Church of Christ.

My husband and I were living in a small apartment in Brooklyn when my son was given a diagnosis by Early Intervention. What followed was months of ineptitude, and we decided to move back to Connecticut to be near family, and because we had heard great things about Connecticut's Birth to Three Program. Bowie thrived under the dramatically better services in Connecticut, and then moved on to Alice Peck Early Learning Center for two years in Special Education Preschool, and he is now in an IIC (Special Education) Kindergarten at West Woods School, where I spent my elementary school years.

Bowie has made incredible progress in Hamden Public Schools due to the devotion and hard work of so many dedicated, creative, smart and hard working professionals, from speech therapists, behavior analysts, and occupational therapists to teachers, administrators and para professionals.

I support Proposed **S.B. No. 542 AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTICUT SPECIAL EDUCATION PREDICTABLE COST COOPERATIVE** because it will equitably distribute special education aid because I and my fellow special education parents are daily bumping up against the limitations of restricted resources, particularly when it comes to staffing and facilities. In short: neither are where they need to be. Facilities are sorely lacking: from the crumbling facilities and lack of air conditioning in the summer at Alice Peck to the fact that West Woods is literally unchanged from over 30 years ago when I was a student there. When it comes to staff, there are a lot of amazing people doing a lot of hard work. But everyone is overworked to the point of (literally) falling asleep in meetings, and paraprofessionals and teachers are either above and beyond amazing despite the low pay, or they are terrible but unchangeable. No matter what, there aren't enough of them. I get it, teaching special needs kids is hard. I see many teachers who are demoralized and underpaid, many paraprofessionals are untrained and underpaid, a lack of specialists (such as BCBA's, SLPs, OTs, PTs) to go around, and a dearth of space or staff to teach the kids what they need to be taught, what will take to see them flourish.

My son Bowie is a brilliant five year old boy, doing second grade level math and reading, doing beautiful drawings of Peabody dinosaur bones with his "Papa Bear" (my dad), blazing trails in the woods with his "Birdie" (my mom), telling jokes, eating snowflakes as they fall from the sky, and playing Legos, trains, art, technology and cars with us and his playdate friends. He has come so very far in two and a half short years, but he (and his special education friends!) could be doing so much more. I encourage you to establish the Connecticut Special Education Predictable Cost Cooperative so that Hamden can get its fair share of resources for our children. Thank you.

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