

## Testimony on Raised SB 976: An Act Concerning Special Education

Education Committee

March 9, 2021

Chairman McCrory, Chairman Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty and other esteemed members of the Education Committee, my name is Win Evarts. I live in Norwalk with my wife and 30-year-old son with an intellectual disability and I'm the Executive Director of The Arc Connecticut, the state's oldest and largest advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD) and promoting their inclusion in the full lives of their communities.

**We support and encourage passage of Section 1 of SB 976** (with revision of lines 7 to 9) which will allow the legislature to address discrimination that has seen children dissuaded, discouraged, and rejected from attending the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System due to a lack of accommodation as provided for by law. Because of this, many students have been unable to develop their knowledge and skills to realize their dreams of employment and an identity based on ability rather than disability.

This bill will ensure that students with disabilities will get an equal chance to get a CTECS education because it requires the language of 10-76q(c) be struck and replaced with language that mandates the sending school district to administer the PPT and redefines the role of CTECS as a single member of the decision-making body determining the student's placement, in line with placement methodology used in every other educational setting in our state.

Passage and appropriate implementation of this bill will not only assure equal opportunity, but it will also address the concerns raised by a 2017 Department of Justice investigation into these discriminatory practices and encouragement of legislation to assist in settling this matter.

Additionally, it seems that sections 10-76q(a) and (b) are not aligned with the revisions to 10-76q(c). I suggest redrafting or eliminating the language to avoid confusion which could be detrimental to the goal of the revisions of 10-76q(c).

**We do not support Section 2 of SB 976** because 1) a task force that has cost as its primary concern conflicts with a central concept of IDEA which is individualization in educational programming; and 2) the proposed task force's composition does not include parents, older youth who receive special education services, advocates, and other stakeholders impacted by special education services.

Thank you for your efforts to improve the lives of all the people in Connecticut.

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