

Lisa Cataldi

From: Angel Schultz <angels@rihandsandvoices.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 13, 2024 8:38 AM
To: Rep. McNamara, Joseph M.
Cc: Rep. Noret, Thomas E.; Rep. Kislak, Rebecca M.; Rep. Biah, Nathan W.; Rep. Caldwell, Justine A.; Rep. Casimiro, Julie A.; Rep. Cotter, Megan L.; Rep. Donovan, Susan R; Rep. Giraldo, Joshua J.; Rep. Morales, David; Rep. Perez, Ramon A.; Rep. Phillips, Robert D.; Rep. Rea, Brian J; Rep. Roberts, Sherry; Rep. Voas, Brandon T.
Subject: Support of IEP HB-7221
Attachments: IEP-Bill-H-7221 .docx

March 11, 2024

The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara
Chair, House Committee on Education
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of H-7221

Chair McNamara:

I am testifying in support of H-7221, a bill that would strengthen parental rights in the IEP process. Currently, an IEP can be changed without parental consent. In addition, when changes are made, whether to a student's placement or based on evaluations, the parent doesn't get to review evaluations before the meeting or visit the new educational setting.

My name is Angel Schultz. I am the President of Hands & Voices, a small parent-led nonprofit organization for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The IEP is often discussed and of great importance to our families. More importantly, I am the mother of an incredible 3-year-old who was born severely profoundly deaf and utilizes cochlear implants to process sound.

Since I received my daughter's diagnosis at birth, I have felt like I needed to prepare for war in terms of making sure my daughter received all the services and communication tools necessary for her to thrive in a world not built for deaf and hard-of-hearing. Preparing for Savanna's IEP meetings meant consulting with other parents and gathering research material to educate my school district. Gathering all language evaluations in spoken English & ASL, audiograms, and the many other evaluations that I have ensured my daughter completed to demonstrate to the district why my daughter needs an auditory SLP, a signing SLP, a teacher of the deaf, and a preferred placement.

When the school conducts their own assessments, they more often than not presented to the parents on the day of IEP. This does not give a parent a proper amount of time to review and process documents in preparation for the IEP meeting- resulting in sometimes missed opportunities and or another missed day of work to have yet another meeting. The whole process can feel burdensome and intimidating. If parents are equal members of the IEP team, how are they not given the same information at the same time as everyone else on the team?

As the parent of a child who utilizes cochlear implants, I am very invested in my daughter's placement. I need to understand the acoustics in any room where educational instruction is given to ensure that my daughter gets full access and can educate the school if needed.

This bill would:

- Require schools to share evaluation reports and other important documents with parents in advance of IEP meetings.
- Give parents the right to observe placements proposed for their children; and
- Restores the requirement to obtain written parental consent before implementing changes to a student's IEP.

I urge you to vote in favor of bill H-7221.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak in favor of H-7221.

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Angel Schultz, President
Rhode Island Hands & Voices
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"What works for your child, is what makes the choice right"

