

My name is Judith Dixon and I live in Barrington. I am the parent of Jayden who has an Individualized Special Education Program 504/IEP in RI. I am submitting testimony today in support of the Office of a Parent Engagement Placement Rep Kislak Bill H7721 because this bill would support parents to be a more empowered part of the IEP team, and to make important decisions for their child's education and educational placement.

I support H 7721 because of the significant impact it will have on all students with 504/IEPs and their families in Rhode Island as well as the educators who serve them. The IEP process can be very daunting for families with language and procedures that are unfamiliar to those not working in special education. I like that this bill would provide legal protections to help families. For example, mandating that written copies of all documents be given to families at least 3 days before a meeting is essential to understanding the process. I always request these documents and didn't realize that at present the school district is not required to send them to me.

In addition, no child should have to go to a school placement that their parents have not even seen. I believe schools should be mandated to let parents visit a placement during school hours without exception as it is the best way to assure parents that there is no mistreatment of the children which sadly can be a reality for special needs students.

Finally, I do think a signature to consent to an IEP is vital and I like that this bill allows you to consent to parts of the IEP if you only disagree with some of it. I was recently told at a meeting that the "team all agreed that Jayden's IEP reflected a free and appropriate public education" even though I did not agree.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony, and I am asking all of you today to pass House Bill H7721.

Sincerely
Judith Dixon
3.12.24