

March 13, 2024

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

Re: Testimony in SUPPORT of H-7721

Chair McNamara:

My name is Laura Sanders and I am testifying in support of H-7721, a bill that would strengthen parental rights in the IEP process. The way things are currently, an IEP can be changed without parent consent. In addition to this, when changes are made, whether to a student's placement or based on evaluations, the parent doesn't get to review evaluations prior to the meeting or visit the new educational setting.

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 am supporting this bill as both a neurodivergent adult and a parent of an autistic child. The IEP process is meant to be a collaboration between parents and the school district to determine the best accommodations and placements. Parents cannot fulfill this role without adequate information and preparation.

Unfortunately, special needs children are particularly vulnerable to abuse in schools and institutions. Without being able to observe a proposed placement, I would never be sure that my child is safe.

I urge you to vote in favor of bill H-7721.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak in favor of H-7721.

Laura Sanders
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