

Kristina Teague
Child Development Services
LD 2214

Committee members, I am writing to ask you to continue to support Child Development Services and its employees. I am an IEP Coordinator for Child Development Services. My job is to handle cases from intake through kindergarten transition. A main part of my job is to make referrals for services.

I am not in favor of moving our services to public schools. After 30 years of teaching special education, I left due to high caseloads and lack support available. While the students I serve now are underserved, it is not nearly as underserved as I witnessed in the public-school setting. My CDS students are currently underserved in specially designed instruction and transportation.

Special purpose classrooms for preschoolers have waitlists of up to 18 months. Many of my families have asked their public school to allow their children to attend. They have asked for support from ed techs and special education teachers. My families are told no because those employees do not have time in their day. They are also told that their children are not allowed to attend public school without that support in place. It's a lose/lose situation. Shifting services to public school will just further burden that system. Each year that I taught special purpose classrooms in public school, children were turned away because the room was at capacity. Each year that I taught a resource level classroom in public school, children spent the entirety of their day separated from peers while waiting for an opening in a special purpose classroom for months. Many years, students needed to be placed on a plan that only included 2 hours of tutoring daily in place of school while waiting for their spot. Public schools are having trouble hiring for the positions they currently have open. Adding more open positions will not benefit anyone. One of my thoughts here is where will these children fit? Every public school I have worked was so overcrowded that some teachers taught in modified closets.

Transportation is very difficult to acquire for our preschoolers. Commercial providers are not interested in accepting children at the rate that CDS pays as they make more from insurance-based clients. Moving CDS to public school would not remedy this issue. Public schools struggle to get their current students to school daily. Robocalls, social media posts, and text alerts go out daily letting parents know which busses are running and which are not due to driver shortage. Many times, the choice is made to cancel special vans and mini busses as it affects fewer children. I know of one city that has only been able to staff their current busses one day in 2 months.

There is change needed but not this change.

Please support Child Development Services in this supplemental budget. Thank you