

Ruth Joyce
Brunswick School Department
LD 1098

Dear Committee,

I am writing to provide testimony on LD 1098: An Act to Ensure Equal Access to a Full School Day for All Students. My name is Ruth Joyce, and I am Director of Special Education in Brunswick. I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective on this important piece of legislation.

I oppose the bill as the use of abbreviated school day is already highly regulated in Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) to include:

(a) Address how the child will meet the system of learning results (which may include a core of standards in English language arts and mathematics for kindergarten through grade 12 established in common with other states), and receive full access to the general curriculum and services on the IEP, as determined by the individual child's need;

(b) Address how the child will participate in local and statewide assessments;

(c) Develop a revised IEP with a re-entry plan for the child to return to a full-time school day within a reasonable period of time, no longer than 45 calendar days; and,

(d) Delineate in the revised IEP with the re-entry plan the actions the SAU will take to assist the child to participate in a full day of school; and

(e) Document in the Written Notice the basis for the determination of an abbreviated school day and how the determination is based on the individual needs of the child.

I am concerned this could lead to more restrictive placements without leaving time to make thoughtful plans, or adjustments. Shortened days should be a temporary measure that is determined by the IEP team. The parameters around abbreviated school days are already outlined in a way that is structured and emphasizes the return to a full day as quickly as possible. Abbreviated day plans are sculpted within IEP team meetings including parents and guardians. These decisions are taken very seriously, and are typically a last intervention. We take into consideration all aspects of the students' needs when building an abbreviated schedule: the most successful part of the day, favorite subject, access to peers, and many other pieces to support the plan. This bill seems unnecessary, and is confusing in light of the language that is already outlined in MUSER, it muddies the waters. An abbreviated day should be determined in an IEP meeting and should not be subject to a sudden change without the convening of an IEP team meeting.

Respectfully,
Ruth Joyce