



Testimony Neither For Nor Against LD 1626:

An Act to Improve Professional Development for Educational Technicians and School Support Staff

Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Gay Anne McDonald and I am the Executive Director for the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the MADSEC Legislative Committee pursuant to LD 1626: An Act to Improve Professional Development for Educational Technicians and School Support Staff.

MADSEC submits testimony neither for nor against LD 1626. We appreciate the intent of this bill and strongly support the training needs for educational technicians and school support staff, however share questions and concerns with the bill text, such that we cannot fully support as presented.

Specific to LD 1626, MADSEC is concerned with implications the bill may have on local school districts, including:

- Collective bargaining agreements
 - Several school districts have support staff collective bargaining agreements, which include a specific number of work days; typically between 175-181 days; those which include days beyond 175 school days are already held for district or school training
 - Conflicts with teacher contracts if teachers are responsible for providing the significant number of trainings described in the bill
- Fiscal impact to local school budgets
 - Outside of the collective bargaining agreement, the cost of the trainings described in subsection 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 would be substantial - either paid time outside of the school day or substitute pay during the school day
 - Cost of the trainer, if contracted, or for a school employee if outside of their workday or substitute pay if during their work day
- Restrictiveness of timelines and number of trainings
 - Immediately upon hire presents a barrier when an educational technician is needed immediately to support student needs, yet the person conducting the training is not readily available
 - Obtaining records for transfer students can take days or weeks and providing the training prior to would not be considered good practice nor would providing training prior to observing the student within the current school environment and collecting the necessary data - it's important for the special education teacher and other applicable specialists to collect and analyze data prior to providing specific training for an "unknown student"
 - Number of highly specific trainings for one educational technician- best practice is for educational technicians to work with several different students, which would result in a significant number of



trainings for each educational technician on multiple different students with multiple disabilities across several grade levels, which could change at anytime based on student needs

- "Every child is different, every program is different, every SAU is different, and every ed tech is different with a different skill set and level of education or experience for the restrictive, highly specific training requirements set forth in the bill" [Practicing administrators of special education]
- One-to-one assignments
 - Although best practice is not to assign one adult to one student due to over-dependence, learned helplessness, etc., there are certain situations in which this assignment is made. The vast majority of times, this type of restrictive assignment is based on the very unique and complex needs of the individual student, such that specialists are a part of the student's team and they provide very specific training to school staff, including the educational technician(s)
- Time away from students
 - Due to barriers with collective bargaining agreements and the significant cost to local school districts for trainings to occur outside of the work day, MADSEC suspects most trainings would need to occur during the work day, which would greatly impact special education services to students as the trainings would result in a number of days away from providing the much needed services to students

Additionally, MADSEC questions:

- What is the effective date?
- Who will be responsible for providing the training - how will the person be determined?
- Accountability - who will keep record of the training and provide accountability?

Given these above questions and concerns, MADSEC is not able to fully support LD 1626 as presented.

Thank you for your time and commitment to Maine students and educational staff.

Respectfully,

Gay Anne McDonald

Gay Anne McDonald
Executive Director

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