

To whom it may concern,

The title of this bill is to “An Act to Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process”. If enacted, this bill will in fact impede the IEP process. I am a school-based Occupational Therapist, therefore, my role on the IEP team is highly specialized. I am the only individual on the team board certified in occupational therapy, and licensed in occupational therapy.

Most parents do not understand the available resources of the school district, research-based practices for IEP services and evidence-based occupational therapy practices. Further, parents may not have a strong understanding of special education law and the provision of occupational therapy services as a support to the student in his or her ability to access his or her IEP. Additionally, regular educators often have a limited understanding of special education law and research-based practices for IEP services. Additionally, IEP team members may not understand that the special education process is need-based, not benefit-based.

Currently, parents have the right to due process if they disagree with any IEP process or program decisions. Parents also have a right to be an equal participant in IEP team meetings per current Maine law. These rights successfully give parents an equal party in the IEP process already without delaying the process and therefore the student’s ability to access her or her education.

If this law is enacted, it will ultimately harm special education students. It has the potential to deny students their rights to the least restrictive environment and equal access to education.

If this law is enacted, the state will only weaken the IEP process and deny students’ their rights to appropriately access their education.

*Thank you,
Alicia Dostilio, MS, OTR/L*