

Lisbon School Department – Office of Student Services

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RE: LD 552 as Amended

Sec. 3. 20-A MRSA §7202, sub-§13 is enacted to read: 13. Changes to individualized education program. A school administrative unit shall obtain informed written consent from the parent of a child with a disability prior to changing the nature or extent of the special education placement or special education and related services. If a parent refuses consent for a proposed individualized education program or placement, the child's most recent agreed upon individualized education program or placement must remain in effect unless and until: A. The school administrative unit and parent agree otherwise; B. The matters are resolved; or C. A party files for due process, in which case the individualized education program or placement must be governed by 34 CFR 300.518.

Dear Members of the Education Committee

I write in opposition to the proposed changes to LD 552 as Amended for a number of reasons. As a Special Education Director I am always interested in working with parents regarding educational programming for their children. Even when parents agree with proposed changes or evaluations or even initial service delivery it is difficult to obtain signatures. Students often go weeks or months without the recommended services or evaluations despite numerous and varied attempts to secure written approval from parents.

I began and spent the first 30+ years of my professional career in Massachusetts and was a Special Education Director in Peabody and Amesbury, MA. Massachusetts requires parental signature and agreement for any change in services, placement, goals or accommodations for students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) similar to the proposed bill. The challenge of securing these signatures which were required before any change was instituted often had students in more or less restrictive programming than was required (depending on parent perspective), working on inappropriate goals and objectives and sometimes receiving services which were no longer needed. In other situations students were deprived of badly needed and recommended services for want of a signature. I have personally driven to homes to try to secure signatures. Many parents literally went years without signing IEPs and students were the losers.

The administrative burdens of trying to obtain signatures was time consuming and costly. It is easy to say just send another copy and document your efforts. Postage is expensive, at times unreliable and even when you move to registered mail responses are often not forthcoming.

I encourage you to reject this bill.

Regards,


Kathleen Glennon, M. Ed., CAES

Director of Student Services.