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The title of this bill is to “An Act to Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process”. If enacted, this bill will do the exact opposite for the IEP process. As an instructional strategist, who is responsible for running IEP meetings for my district, I am speaking from direct experience.

Most parents do not understand the available resources of the school district, research-based practices for IEP services, and have a limited understanding of special education law. 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.

If consensus were required for each decision of the IEP process, it would unnecessarily prolong the IEP team process.

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 that are already in place successfully give parents an equal party in the IEP process already without delaying the process.

If this law is enacted, it will ultimately harm special education students. It will require that the special education team spend more time and energy preparing data and convincing parents to agree with IEP team decisions. This means that the special education team will have less time and energy to spend providing those services to students.

I think it's safe to say that if this law is enacted, the state will have even less special education teachers than it already does. If the state would like to improve the special education process, the efforts should be focused on ensuring that all IEP team members (specifically regular educators, administrators and parents) are knowledgeable about special education law and its implications.