

Senator Daughtry, Representative Brennan and other members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

My name is Jamie McAlpine and I am an Ed Tech in RSU 14 and I am here to speak in support of LD 552, An Act To Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process. In our school district, Ed Techs do not attend IEP meetings unless specifically requested by the family. This has been the practice for the time I have been working here. If the case manager (Special Ed teacher) or classroom teacher request that we attend, they are always told no. As Ed Techs, we have pushed back on this asking why. The first answer always received is that the meetings fall outside of our work hours (we work 8am-3pm and the IEPs are either at 7:30am or 3:15pm) and they will not pay us to attend. When we push back further stating that we are happy to attend without pay, we are told no again, with a multitude of excuses that rotate and change.

In the last 9 years of my employment, I have attended two IEP meetings, both at the request of the families. At those meetings, I was able to provide specific answers to questions the parents or outside workers have because I was the person who worked with those students one-on-one in their classrooms. When we do not attend, we meet with the case manager (often before or after school, outside of our working hours) to provide them with the data and evidence they will need to present on the student's present levels of functioning. There have been a number of times while presenting and speaking to this data, that a parent or outside worker will ask a question or request more information that the case manager cannot provide as they don't always have that information. This results in some uncomfortable feelings because the parent is frustrated their question has gone unanswered and the case manager is frustrated because they couldn't answer the question. With the Ed Tech there in the meeting, it is far more likely those questions can be answered in the moment.

As Ed Techs, we work with our students, oftentimes, from the moment they walk in the building to the moment they leave at the end of the day. As one on ones, we are the one constant person these students have. We notice the slightest changes in behavior, whether positive or negative. We notice when they are starting to act a little "off" where they may be getting ready to come down with something or may not have slept the night before, and are able to adjust what that student's day will look like based on their current needs. Before writing this, I spoke with a number of my Special Ed teachers asking them their opinions on having Ed Techs attend if appropriate, and each one of them were in agreement that it would be beneficial to help share the student's narrative and help express their needs much more fluidly. As Ed Techs, we are our student's go to person. It makes sense to allow that one person who spends the entire school day with the child to be present at the meeting and get to speak to that child's day and needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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