



Learning  
Disabilities  
Association  
of Maine

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Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, my name is Shelly Mountain and I serve on the Executive Board of the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine (LDAME) whose mission is to create opportunities for success for all individuals affected by learning disabilities through support, education, and advocacy. I am testifying, on behalf of LDAME, in support of LD 552.

The teachers who work with a student and that student's parent/guardian are the people who spend the most time with the student. As such they have the best understanding of teaching strategies, techniques, interventions, and accommodations that allow that student the fairest educational experience and the best opportunity to realize potential.

A stated purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is ***"strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home."***

(<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-i/1400>). LD 552 would ensure the equal standing of all members of an IEP team. Allowing the recommendations of teachers and parents to be overridden or vetoed by someone who does not regularly interact with the student cannot, in any way, be construed to be fair or appropriate.

I was confused when I first heard about this bill. I thought this was already law. As a parent I went through 11 years of IEP meetings for my sons. I spent a lot of time preparing for those meetings – researching and seeking advice about what would be the best educational plan for my kids. I was blissfully ignorant that it might all be for naught if one person didn't agree with my opinion. I had a pretty good relationship with the district's Special Ed Director. I now wonder what I would have done if she had decided she disagreed with the rest of the team or if she decided to change the IEP without my consent. I probably would have filed a complaint. As a full-time mother I had the time and resources to do that. Many parents don't.

Parenting an LD child is challenging. Teaching an LD student is challenging. Experiencing learning disabilities is challenging. IEP meetings can be intimidating, so intimidating that my kids chose not to attend. A parent is usually outnumbered by staff. It is important to ensure that all members are valued equally and that the experiences of all team members are considered. LD 552 would bring Maine closer to realizing the intent of IDEA.

Thank you.