

# MSAD #51

*The Schools of Cumberland and North Yarmouth, Maine*

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## Comments On Proposal LD 552

March 11, 2021

To: Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

From: Julie Olsen, Director of Instructional Support MSAD #51

These comments are being submitted to outline concerns regarding the proposed LD 552: An Act to Strengthen The Individual Education Program Process. As a Director of Instructional Support for a southern Maine district, I support collaboration and consensus based decision making that is student driven and focused in our IEP process. However, I worry that LD 552 will actually be more harmful for our students and get in the way of them accessing much needed IEP services. If the team is unable to reach an agreement, the student will be in stay-put while a legal proceeding takes place. Not only will the student lose out on potentially much needed services and/or appropriate programming, the legal proceedings are costly and emotionally draining for all parties involved. Our current Chapter 101 Special Education Regulations allow decisions to be made on behalf of students rather than to be put on hold at the expense of students' programming. We need to maintain a process where we strive for consensus, but ultimately decisions can be made and programming can move forward for students.

The second part of LD 552 is equally concerning for school districts. If any person working with a student can deem themselves a team member and be required to attend the IEP team meeting, district administration loses the ability to thoughtfully schedule meetings that allow all

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students in district to have qualified staff working with them at the same time as having meetings happen within the contracted school day. If more staff begin attending all IEP meetings (such as an entire team of regular education teachers rather than a representative or all educational technicians who work with the student) then there will be no staff left to work with the rest of the students. If all meetings are scheduled outside the contracted school day then this will be a contractual and financial burden on districts.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns and I am available to answer any questions or follow ups on this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Olsen".

Julie Olsen, Ed.D

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