

# Regional School Unit No. 68

Serving the Communities of Charleston, Dover-Foxcroft, Monson and Sebec



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*SeDoMoCha Campus Entrance*

March 18, 2021

Dear Senator/Representative,

I am writing today to urge you to **not** pass the proposed bill LD 552, An Act to Strengthen the Individualized Education Program Process. The bill's name in my opinion will actually have the exact opposite effect on the student's educational plan.

Daily I work with families through the IEP process, and also worked through this process as a parent of a special education student. The process is collaborative in nature. Parents, students and advocates and others with knowledge of the student are welcome to attend. We work hard with families to ensure the meeting is held at a time that is convenient to them, this is a priority so they can attend along with others they choose to invite. We provide notice to the family of who the school will also be inviting. As student's are able, their voice is equally heard in the process.

My concern is that any **one member** that doesn't agree can derail the process. Thereby delaying the implementation of important services to support the child, have a child continue in a placement that may not be adequately addressing their current needs, or potentially remain in service that they no longer require thereby missing out on important instructional time in the classroom. When you consider consensus, we implement the IEP based on the full services that are agreed upon. If there is not consensus in one area, the last IEP, or in some incidences no IEP would begin, thereby delaying services for that student to access their education. While the adults work through the student's placement. This could become a lengthy, expensive process for all involved. But my deepest concern is that during this time the student is not getting the services they need.

Remember it is any team member that doesn't agree. That may be an Ed Tech, that works 1:1 with a student that doesn't agree this child is ready to be more independent, but truly the move might mean that person doesn't have a job anymore. Or perhaps a teacher that doesn't want the extra work creating modifications this student may require. It may be an outside provider for the

student that doesn't have an understanding of the school system, and services. For example, this school year I had two parents told by their child's therapist to NOT send their child due to anxiety and the impact of COVID. In both of these cases we discussed first trying in-person learning, and then looking at concerns and how we could address these concerns as a team. In both of these cases, the parents have come and said, Thank You! We listened to you, sent our student, and it was the very best decision. Now imagine that therapist attending the meeting, and not agreeing to in-person learning. Although, this was not an IEP decision, or a part of the IEP process, it is the most recent example of a provider not agreeing with the determination, and ultimately not agreeing with the parent's wishes as well.

When a parent/guardian doesn't agree with the process there is already a procedure in place for them to follow. They are made aware of this process annually; it is included in the written notice (minutes) of the meeting. While they are working through the process the student stays with the services in place for the last IEP.

As you consider this bill, I would be happy to invite you to attend an IEP meeting to observe the process. I have many parents that would agree to your attendance, and all of the meetings are already done through Google Meets. I also have parents that would be happy to discuss the collaborative nature of the IEP meeting.

As you carefully consider this bill, please don't let the thoughts of one IEP member actually weaken the student's program, and derail the actual process.

Sincerely,



Susan L. Watson

Director of Special Services, RSU#68

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