

My name is Rosemary Kitzinger. I am a resident of Carroll County and a proud mom of 4 children, two with disabilities. Please support this important bill. Over my 23 years of being a parent of children with disabilities I have found that our procedural safeguards intended to protect our most vulnerable children are only as good as they are enforceable and accessible.

In 2013 my husband and I had the displeasure of having to fight the school system for our oldest daughter, Marissa, who has Autism and several other disabilities. During her junior year of high school it became apparent we needed to have Marissa placed in a different setting for her to achieve an appropriate education. When faced with the need to hire an attorney and experts for a Due Process hearing we were at a loss. Although we are a typical middle class family, we could not afford the thousands of dollars required for a retainer for the attorney or the thousands required for the experts to testify for our daughter's benefit. We had no choice but to swallow our pride and start fundraising. We fundraised through social media platforms and we even organized and held a bingo at our local fire hall. All of this just so we could access our procedural safeguards in hopes that an ALJ would enforce what was our daughter's right to a Free Appropriate Public Education. We knew if we prevailed we might have a chance at recouping the attorney fees, but we were at a complete loss for the expert fees.

In 2018 we had the misfortune of having Due Process filed against our 9 year old son, Collin, over my request for an IEE to assess him for a potential reading or writing disability. During the 3 day Due Process hearing something became abundantly clear to me, our system is flawed and unfair to parents of children with disabilities. As I looked around the hearing room each day, I noticed there were 6-8 staff members at a minimum in addition to the school board attorney. Many of these staff members were called as expert witnesses for the school system. I am guessing that the school system didn't have to fundraise in order to hire their attorney or produce their expert witnesses. The procedural safeguards intended to protect children like mine are not accessible for many parents and therefore are not enforceable. Please help right this wrong with your support for this important bill. Thank you.

Sincerely the proud mom of four, including a daughter with Autism and a son with Dyslexia