



# Loud Voices Together™

Educational Advocacy Group

*"Empowering Students with Different Abilities and their Families through Preparation and Persistence."*

HB184

Special Education - Judicial Actions - Attorney's Fees and Related Costs

House Ways and Means and Judiciary

Public Hearing – January 30, 2020

1: 00 p.m., State Capitol

Good afternoon Madam Chair, Vice-Chair, and esteemed Committee members:

I am Ronnetta Stanley, Executive Director of Loud Voices Together Educational Advocacy Group, Inc., and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding HB 184- Attorney Fees and Expert Costs. In my capacity, I serve students with disabilities and their families who receive services and supports through an IEP or 504 plan, whichever is applicable to meet the student's unique needs.

Supporting this bill is essential to parents exercising their procedural rights when disputes arise with a local education agency. Such disputes include the development of IEP goals and objectives; the level of service; the denial of related services like Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy, Social Skills Training, and Counseling along with the student's educational placement.

Often, parents will attend multiple IEP meetings with the hope of being collaborative with the school team to meet their child's unique needs. In some instances, this is successful and in others, it is not. The families I serve are from varied socioeconomic status, which should not become a barrier to securing high-quality legal representation and experts. However, the reality is it does create insurmountable barriers, which keeps a certain subset of students and families marginalized.

School systems do not have this concern because they have access to built-in experts without incurring additional costs, which creates inequity. It is my hope that today this esteemed committee will support the rights of ALL- students, parents, and schools by providing equitable opportunity to exercise their procedural safeguards by removing the greatest barrier - COSTS.

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Supporting HB184 provides families with access to high-quality representation and experts when parties have reached an impasse. It is my hope that today you will offer your full support by passing HB184. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

*R Stanley, M.Ed.*

Ronnetta Stanley, M. Ed.

Executive Director