

## **House Bill 184**

**Thank you for allowing me to give my testimony in support of HB 184 – Attorney’s fees and related costs. I am the legal guardian/grandmother of a student who attended the Prince Georges County Public School (PGCPS) system. My grandson was born with a heart defect and one lung. Developmental delays and learning disabilities are often associated with his heart defect.**

**My grandson was in the PGCPS system beginning with the Head Start program when I recognized a problem with his reading and other academic subjects. I brought it to the attention of the administrators and they said nothing was wrong. I then sent him to a PGCPS charter school because there was supposed to be smaller classroom sizes. To my dismay, there were as many students in the classroom as in a regular school. I again brought to the attention of the administrators that something was not right. Yes, we had a SIT meeting for me to hear that nothing was wrong. I was so upset that the PGCPS system was just going to continue to pass my grandson on and give him passing grades. Fed up, I removed my grandson from the PGCPS and put him in a small classroom size private school. That is where the passing on was going to stop. The school offered me a special education program for \$750 per month in addition to the tuition of \$700. There was no way I could pay that on my retired income. I removed him after 3 quarters and home-schooled him. My grandson did really well in the one-on-one environment. My grandson re-entered the Prince Georges County Public School system in the 2014-2015 school year.**

**In the summer of 2014, I informed the PGCPS that my grandson was returning to the PGCPS and he has a reading disability. In August 2014, I had the National Children’s Hospital Center conduct assessments to confirm what I always thought. The neuropsychologist confirmed that my grandson was ADHD with a specific learning disability. A very detailed report was prepared and presented to the PGCPS and he was found eligible for special education services. He did not get an IEP until January 2015 due to the difficulty of the special education teacher writing an IEP, which did not meet any of his needs.**

**The Special Education coordinators assigned were qualified based on their credentials; however, they were not trained very well to help children with reading disabilities. No child should be on more than one intervention basically**

at the same time. My grandson was given at least 3 reading interventions back to back without being assessed by the school system. During these years, my grandson did not master any of his IEP goals based on the poorly written and inadequate services he received in reading comprehension, phonetics, math, etc. To attempt to make sure my grandson will be able to function independently later in life, I have had to remove him from PGCPs, at my expense, after losing a due process hearing, filing and prevailing on multiple state complaints, multiple phone calls, multiple IEP meetings, and emails to PGCPs.

The due process hearing was my only outlet to continue to help my grandson. All other avenues had failed. From the outset, the deck was stacked against me because I did not have the expert witnesses and adequate legal support I needed to have a fair chance of prevailing on behalf of my grandson to secure the educational placement he needed. Having multiple expert witnesses and a qualified legal professional that have a deep understanding of my grandson's performance and needs would have increased my chances of prevailing greatly.

I wish I could say that my story is isolated to me and my grandson, but it is not. Instead of being an exception, this is the norm. Today you have an opportunity to make this an exception so that all parents can exercise their due process rights with access to expert witnesses to ensure that children like my grandson and other parents and guardians can help provide services to their child.

As it stands, I am depleting my retirement fund and working fulltime to pay for my grandson's education. This is not sustainable. Although due process is not a guaranteed outcome, it provides a chance, an opportunity, to right wrongs that have been done and the only way to do this is to pass HB 184 to allow attorney's fees and related costs to make this process fair to families.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mrs. Lettie Miller