

Student Advocate Montgomery County

Jan. 28, 2020

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland House of Delegates - Ways and Means Committee**

**For the Hearing on HB 184
Special Education - Administrative Proceedings and Judicial Actions –
Attorney's and Expert Witness Fees and Related Costs**

SUPPORT

Dear Chair and Committee members,

Hello, my name is Terrin Carpenter. I am a dyslexic 17 years old Military Kid with an IEP since 2nd grade and I have a 7th grade reading level. I've taken 10th grade for two years and it is projected that I will repeat 11th grade because I'm not receiving an education for a dyslexic nor given enough credits in one school year to advance grades. I use my animal sanctuary to teach around the DMV to a venue of up to 16,000 visitors. I am a 2019 Montgomery County Fair Princess and a camp counselor for 4-H, Girl Scout and my church as well as a Nursery Leader at my church. I have awards from Governors and Presidents. I'm Community Emergency Response Team trained with CPR/First Aid. Because I saved a life, I have a Medal of Honor.

At my first IEP, it was hinted at that I have Dyslexia. MCPS doesn't understand that dyslexia kids need structured literacy instructions for their brain to understand and process reading and writing. The most significant instruction which I needed was spelling as my mother stated in every IEP meeting sometimes 5 meetings a year. The lack of structured literacy causes both mental health disorders (depression, anxiety, PTSD and suicide ideation) and chronic pain. Because I have both and the fact that MCPS won't place me in a dyslexic school, I'm currently in the IIS program which hasn't been developed to help kids with dyslexia nor mental health disabilities. The program is learning from me. IIS hired a Middle School Special Ed teacher who has had the 1 week of Ortin Gillingham training to teach me 1 of the 4 core classes, "English" that I'm supposed to be taking. MCPS doesn't have a school for me. I need a one-on-one to be able to read and understand all academic courses.

When I was going to Seneca Valley High School (SVHS), I was so stressed out because I wasn't getting the help that I needed to understand dyslexia and I was being left behind during the lessons in every class. I would have anxiety attacks nearly every day. I cried every day. I would have to leave the classroom and go to the nurse's or counseling office to try to calm down. One of the school counselors put pressure on not just me but other students by telling us that school comes before our mental health. The same counselor implied during my IEP meeting that I wasn't depressed because she sees me laughing with my friends in the halls. Practically every student at SVHS is anxious, depressed or is going through something. And, none of us have a support system at school to help with mental health disabilities that stem from having dyslexia.

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There are so many student suicide pacts that go on at the school that almost everyone is in at least one. I was cutting at least twice a week during school to relieve stress. I ended up attempting suicide. I now have three friends who have committed suicide. One, unbelievably, was in middle school and two were in high school. Being able to properly teach a dyslexic students is life or death for us.

My mother had to quit her job to help me stay stable and fight SVHS and MCPS so that I could receive this minimal education. I should be receiving 4 core classes, but there isn't anyone to force IIS to find me another teacher to teach that course. MCPS Central Placement Unit is attempting to send me to a behavioral school, R.I.C.A. when there isn't any indication on my IEP that I'm disruptive. Matter of fact, I need a class where there isn't any distraction. I'm much too advanced in the Real World to be supervised on bathroom runs. Upon leaving R.I.C.A after touring it, my mother noticed that I was limping. The doctors diagnosed me with PTSD stemming from the everyday torture that I faced while attending SVHS. Because my mother has been unemployed for over 4 years, she doesn't have the funds to pay for an attorney to attempt to be within the 10% of families who win in Due Process. This is a losing battle for all low income families so why even try? I may be an academic failure, but I'm blessed that my mother puts me first and is super creative to provide for us.

Please support the House Bill 184 because the failure of schools not meeting the needs of students with IEPs is literally killing us. We shouldn't have to go to Due Process to receive FAPE, but because the system forces us to, there shouldn't be a cost which limits low income families from receive justice. Should you have any questions of me, please contact my mom, Terry Wambach at twambach1@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,



Terrin Carpenter