

February 3, 2021

Maryland Senate
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of SB 371: Special Education – Individualized Education Plans – IEE Ed. Evaluations.

Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee.

As a parent and advocate for persons with disabilities, I can't help but support a bill like this one being proposed. The special education procedures protected under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have been under attack by local school systems since the law was first written and implemented nearly 20 years ago. Extending those IEE and Special Education evaluation timelines so that a child can be evaluated, will be helpful to many disabled children and their families. In fact, crucial help to them.

Independent Education Evaluation (IEE) is an eval option that is included into the IDEA law, and allows a parent to request an education evaluation of their child, by a resource outside of their local school system. Many parents new to special education process do not have the resources to fight for an IEE or are taken to Due Process hearings by their local school system for merely requesting an IEE. A very daunting and extremely expensive process. Like many parents, I have been down the Due Process Complaint road with my local school system, and it is not an experience that I or many of us parents would ever like to repeat.

Independent Education Evaluation (IEE), too often our children are denied the services & supports, and the quality education evaluations required to support the need for those SPED services and supports. Our children are seen as expensive burdens being thrust onto local school systems by their parents. They're our kids. Schools are tasked with the legal obligation to educate our children with disabilities by federal law. Illegal gamesmanship by school personnel, playing with the system of Evaluations, IEP processes and IDEA laws to find ways around meeting the obligations of the IDEA law like **Child Find**. A school system's legal duty to identify and service all children with disabilities in their district.

Often delay tactics and feigning ignorance of the federal IDEA laws is just couple of tactics, in a long list, that school system personnel employ against a family to try and slow down the process of identifying and evaluating of their child with disabilities. Hoping that the family will get frustrated by the IEP meeting process and procedures, give up and simply go away. Saving the school district money on evaluations and services for the entirety of that child's education. Directly or indirect action to deny a child with disabilities the services guaranteed to them by federal anti-discrimination laws, is not legal, and certainly is NOT the way forward for the special education process as a whole. Yet it happens in our schools every-single-day. All under the guise of saving tax payer money, our tax money.

Please help to support our students so that they can gain the skills and education so that they can reach their full potential. Please support approaches like Senate Bill 371 in support of our children with disabilities, so that they can get the services they need to be successful today and into the future. Thank you for your time and your consideration of my testimony today.

Mr. Richard Ceruolo

Parent and advocate for persons living with disabilities | Parent Advocacy Consortium