

Testimony Concerning HB 776
“State Department of Education - Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health
Consultation Project - Study and Report”
Submitted to the House Ways & Means Committee
February 12, 2021

Position: Favorable

Thank you for your time today. I had the pleasure of working with Dawn Iannaco-Hahn, LCPC, through the Infants and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program within Montgomery County, when my son was four years old. I believe she is instrumental in how well he is doing now. He is currently a second grader (almost 8 years old).

There are many reasons that working with an early childhood mental health professional improved our outcome. One of the main reasons is that Ms. Iannaco-Hahn worked with the school, the teachers, and our family. She was able to observe the classroom on many occasions to get a real sense of the support that our son and family needed. She was also able to give the teachers the tools that they needed in order to help support my son. Additionally, all of the other children were able to benefit from the skills that she taught the teachers.

We found the attention and hands on approach to this program to be amazing. My son’s challenges are not “typical” challenges that would normally receive help in the classroom. He has sensory processing disorder, which means he is constantly looking for sensory stimulation. For him, that meant having a hard time sitting and focusing, as well as sucking on two of his fingers on a regular basis. He wouldn’t benefit from Physical Therapy or Speech, etc. This is where a mental health professional comes in. They are able to understand that his challenges have a mental health component to them. Without the information and tools that Ms. Iannaco-Hahn provided my family with, I don’t believe I would have known to do anything.

Based on the above information, we have been able to successfully advocate for our son. We began working with both a developmental pediatrician and an occupational therapist. Along with them and the training that his Pre-K teachers received, he made a great transition to Kindergarten.

In my family’s personal situation, this program made a huge impact. Being able to collaboratively work closely with a specialist was amazing. Four years later, I still keep in touch with Dawn, giving her updates on my son and thanking her for her support.

Thank you-

Allyson Nelson

Parent of 3 (ages 3, 5 and 7)

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