

Kathleen Burke Kourebanas, parent, Essex Jct., VT

4/7/16

Testimony submit to House Education Committee on behalf of daughter, Martha Kourebanas, autism, age 16 (at risk for residential out of state placement due to lack of policy supporting VT based placement.)

Contacts: Essex High School

Erin Maguire, LEA (emaguire@ccsuvt.org) lead on Act 264 crisis placement

Kathleen Burke Kourebanas, parent (kathleenbk@comcast.net)

Trans II self manage waiver (kara@transitionII.com)

MK currently staffed 2:1 RBT and BCBA oversight

MK age 16.4, currently on waitlist out of state residential placement

Currently awaiting LIT (4/20/16), completed ACT 264 with a comprehensive plan to avoid residential placement. IEP team recommends wrap around home services to avoid out of state placement. **Funding 1 time cost needed.**

**A) VT home placement wrap around, stay in home/school/community:
Recommended by MK comprehensive IEP treatment team (psychiatrist, pediatrician, family, school)**

***No additional IEP amended educational costs (ABA recommended by treatment team and covered and approved by Medicaid DVHA)**

***1 time funding request submitted by Trans II (\$136,000, parent will contribute by paying 'budget items list', see estimate)**

***No additional waiver funds needed**

B) OUT of State Residential:

***Approximately \$350,000 to \$450,000/year (MK is a 2:1 staff 24/7)**

At graduation, (MK's 22nd birthday 11/27/2020) MK lives in group adult home on campus. NO RETURN TO VT date after age 22, until appropriate services are available to her. (costs post age 22, to be determined.)

Summary:

Plan A: is what family and IEP team want. Fiscally responsible, smooth transition to adulthood, stay in current home/vocation/occupation/community/school, MK continues current health care providers: Doctor/Psychiatrist/Dentist. Must modify home as IEP team recommends, MK stays in ALL natural supports, behavior plan becomes a 'continuum', **more apt to reach 1:1 staffing ratio goal.** VT wants to keep VT children and VT dollars in VT, support family, support local economy, etc.

Plan B: will destabilize MK, rip loving family apart, leave home, community, all natural supports, losing all progress worked for up until this point. MK will not have a re-entry date, as residential chosen because of long-term adulthood placement, as VT has nothing currently to meet MK's needs. MK will graduate at 22 and then live in adult group home on campus. MK will not return to VT until appropriate residential programs are built in VT. **Plan B is essentially double current educational costs. Residential school does not accept Medicaid.**

Language to add to Bill H.859 (An Act relating to Special Education)

1) "VT is committed to educating students receiving special education WITHIN THE STATE OF VERMONT, as opposed to out of state placements, whenever a reasonable VT based placement exists."

2)"Funding this VT Based placement will likely be divided by AOE and DAIL, just like out of state costs are shared."

*certain conditions must be met:

-documented long term disability

-high cost of care

-need for residential placement

-school district and supervisory union base decisions on **IEP** team requests, must be a team decision.

**Allowing for flexibility in choice allows for creative solutions that are stymied by the current funding system. This could give the school district a possible higher 'investment allowance' that allows them to spend a higher amount in one (1) year, when they prove that it will, in turn, save significant spending over the subsequent three (3) years.

Please keep in mind:

*An IEP (**Individualized Education Program**) is a legal document that spells out a student's learning and behavior needs that the school provides.

-it sets reasonable goals for a child

-it states the services that the school district will provide for the child

-it is developed by a key team, designed to meet the needs resulting from the child's disability.

*FAPE (**Free and Appropriate Education**) is an educational right of the children with disabilities in the United States, guaranteed by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

***Least Restrictive Environment:** In the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (LRE) means that a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers, to the greatest extent possible.

(In MK case, it would solve the lack of 'system of funding' issue that will essentially send MK out of state to seek services, in a MOST restrictive environment. One time funding in MK case will save an enormous amount of money. Also, school districts can have this control and **push to build the infrastructure so desperately needed in VT.**)

Thank you so much for your time and thoughtful consideration,
Kathleen Burke Kourebanas Essex Junction, VT kathleenbk@comcast.net