

February 13, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Tori Kelliher, I am the manager of the Mulberry Bush Independent School. I am submitting this written testimony to stress the importance of the continued refunding of the Special Accommodation Grants (SAG). Children in need of special supports shouldn't be at risk of losing funding that is enabling them to be safe, to grow, to build strong relationships and feel competent in their school environments. Families of children with special needs also need to know that funding is available to allow their child to be taken care of with strong consistent instruction they are at work or school. Loss of these funds endangers the ability for parents to work to support their families and to go to school to further their career.

The availability of this grant supports early learning programs in meeting the needs of young children so they can flourish and be ready for kindergarten. The funding from these grants help children who otherwise would not have been able to continue attending our school.

Over a span of six years, the Mulberry Bush helped two children on the Autism Spectrum to successfully graduate to kindergarten. Both of these children were identified as needing special support services in our infant or toddler classrooms. Both children received services through CIS and EEE. Regardless these children needed a one on one aide in order to continue in our program with other children and to not only embed the educational accommodations needed for them to learn skills but also to develop relationships. Without the aide, funded by the SAG, both children would have had to leave our program or greatly reduced their number of days or hours. The grant helped us to have the aide to cover all the hours the parents needed in order for them to continue working or go to nursing school. These are just two examples of the successful use of the SAG funds.

When the SAG was defunded several months back, we in fact were in process of trying to get a grant that would have benefited three children who were attending our program. All of the children had behavior issues that needed extra supports at different times during the day. Since the grants were defunded and our application denied, we had to help find a new placement for two of the children that would have benefited from the support of an aide.

Thank you for reading my testimony regarding the Special Accommodation Grants. If you have any questions or concerns, I can be reached at 802-258-4350 or tkeliher@brattlebororetreat.org.

Thank you,

Victoria L Kelliher (Tori)

Manager of the Mulberry Bush Independent School