



Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

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SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY ON H.140

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. For the record my name is Susan Aranoff and I am testifying on behalf of the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council where I am the Senior Planner and Policy Analyst. The Council is a federally funded advisory board charged with improving through public policy, the supports and services for people who experience a developmental disability. Special Education is one of the most critical service systems in Vermont.

The Council strongly supports the passage of H140 as Vermont needs to come into compliance with federal law or risk losing more than 12 million dollars of federal funding for special education services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”) requires that each state establish and maintain an advisory panel for the purpose of advising the State special education staff regarding the education of eligible children with disabilities. Federal regulations define responsibilities for each state panel as follows:

- Advise the state on unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities;
- Comment publicly on any rules and regulations proposed by the state regarding the education of children with disabilities;
- Advise the state in developing evaluations and reporting on data as required by federal special education laws;
- Advise the state in developing corrective action plans for U.S. Department of Education; and
- Advise the state in developing and implementing policies relating to coordination of services for children with disabilities.

The advisory panel must consist of members appointed by the Governor, or any other official authorized under State law to make such appointments, be representative of the State population and be composed of individuals involved in, or concerned with the education of children with disabilities, including teachers, special educators and others set out in the federal regulations. The regulations state that a majority of the members of the panel must be individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities (ages birth through 26).

Vermont’s Special Education Advisory Council is out of compliance with several of the federal requirements. For example, testimony presented in the House revealed that only 3 members of the 13 member group are individuals with a disability or parents of an individual with a disability – far short of the majority required.

Therefore, the VTDDC strongly supports passage of H140. We have reviewed this Committee's most recent draft and suggest adding two provisions from the House Bill:

1. Inclusion of one representative of the State protection and advocacy system for individuals with disabilities.
2. Prohibition on dual roles for parents and individuals with disabilities:

Appointees may be appointed to fill more than one role except that individuals appointed as individuals with disabilities or parents of individuals with disabilities shall not be appointed to fill any other role.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to the Committee in your efforts to strengthen Vermont's Special Education laws.

Best,
Susan Aranoff