

March 31, 2020

Good afternoon Senators,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify about special education in the time of school closures. My name is Anastasia Douglas and I am a resident of Barre Town. I am an attorney employed as a 50 state legislative analyst, currently working from home with my six year old son, Myles, and three year old daughter, Rose. Myles and Rose are enrolled at Barre Town Elementary and Middle School in kindergarten and preschool and Myles has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. I apologize in advance if either child needs attention during my testimony.

Since the school's closed, I have juggled the role of a full time employee, teacher of a preschooler, teacher of a kindergarten, special education teacher and speech pathologist – most of which I am supremely unqualified for. Many parents also have to take on additional roles, like physical or occupational therapists. My son has a wonderful team and they have provided online check ins, instructional packets and remote learning opportunities. They have been very responsive over email and phone. Despite all of the resources provided, I have found myself at a loss for time to provide Myles with many of them.

I reviewed the Agency of Education's Special Education During School Closure Due to a Novel Coronavirus Outbreak guidance document, as updated on March 21. The questions the document rose for me were:

- How will this information be given to parents in an understandable manner?
- How will parents be trained? This is a concern given many parents are already balancing multiple roles right now.
- Will schools be providing parents with the materials their children use in school?
- What will compensatory services at a later date look like? Is summer school expected to happen and could compensatory services be provided then?

I am also concerned about step four of the five step decision making process listed on page 10 that asks *Shall the team consider a deduction based on the student's reasonable recovery of progress once school resumes? Shall a deduction be made for exceptional/unreasonable conduct (ex: parent rejects services and supports offered; student places themselves or others at risk while an attempt is being made to offer the services)?*

I know that in the next few months I will be put in the position to reject services because I need my computer and phone for work and have to balance my work needs with allowing Myles to access virtual instruction. I have to stop my work to give Myles my laptop and/or phone and also to supervise him. This particularly concerns me because I don't want children to be precluded from receiving compensatory services because parents are being asked to manage an impossible task. It will be difficult to provide many special education services remotely and

compensatory services will be vital to ensuring we don't leave our kids receiving special education behind.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you have to the best of my ability.

Anastasia Douglas, Esq.