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METTAWEE SCHOOL DISTRICT •• TACONIC AND GREEN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT •• WINHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 22, 2022

Dear Senate Education Committee,

I write to you today in support of H.716, Section 2. When I taught in Idaho, the state went through the same transition Vermont is currently making, changing from an aptitude-achievement discrepancy model to a response to instruction/intervention model when determining whether a student has a Specific Learning Disability. This is a significant change in practice.

I submitted for your review a peer-reviewed research article titled, "*Using RTI within a Comprehensive SLD Evaluation: A Review of a State's First Year Efforts.*" This article identifies the challenges the state faced when making this transition. This is to be expected, as it is such a significant paradigm shift. Vermont has the opportunity to learn from their experience.

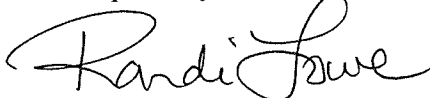
Idaho provided what I considered to be a comprehensive yearlong training series to support special education teachers and other evaluation team members in understanding the new determination process. The training series occurred over the course of the year prior to implementation, was well developed, included full day trainings, and smaller group learning and application opportunities. I consider it one of the most well developed training series I have experienced. And, we still struggled with implementation for years.

I am advocating for a delay as recommended for a few key reasons:

1. Our teachers and evaluation teams have not received appropriate training for the magnitude of change that is forthcoming with the new SLD determination process.
2. It is inappropriate to ask our teachers to make this shift without adequate training.
3. The AOE has a responsibility to ensure our teachers can accurately and confidently evaluate students by training them to be able to do so.
4. There will be challenges even after training, but without this, we subject our teachers to unnecessary vulnerability to legal challenge.
5. If the changes to Adverse Effect (the second prong of the evaluation process) were the *only* proposed change, I would not be recommending a delay, however combining this with the SLD changes will create an impossible situation for teachers to navigate. This requires delay, as well.

I am very supportive of the proposed changes and look forward to implementation after appropriate training. I encourage you to support this bill and to ensure comprehensive training is provided by the Agency of Education to support our teachers in being prepared for the forthcoming changes.

Respectfully submitted,



Randi Lowe, EdD
Superintendent