

Submitter: Dana Hepper  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Education  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2670

House Education Committee Members,

I am writing to offer my personal support for HB 2670. When my oldest daughter was born, she experienced a brain hemorrhage in her left temporal lobe. She was born limp and purple and struggled to breathe on her own. After many questions and tests, a CT scan revealed the hemorrhage and the resulting blood clot, which was placing significant pressure on her brain. To save her life and well-being, doctors suggested immediate surgery to remove the clot and release the pressure. At three days old, she had the needed brain surgery. The surgery was a success, and none of the worst risks occurred. 1 week later, we were approved to bring Naomi home.

We left with many unknowns. Naomi's left temporal lobe was irreparably damaged. But doctors could not predict what this meant for her development. The range we got was everything from... maybe she'll never learn how to talk... to... maybe she'll have dyslexia or some reading difficulties. We had a slew of follow-up doctor's appointments and supported and monitored her development closely. She did start to babble and form words and sentences all at a typical developmental rate.

When she finally entered Kindergarten, reading, writing, and speech did prove to be areas of struggle. We requested a special education evaluation, and Naomi did qualify for special education services and an IEP. In educating myself as a parent, I had two phone calls and received background documents from the Traumatic Brain Injury Specialist at my local Regional Inclusive Services program. Even though Naomi did not have a "Traumatic" brain injury, and she could not be eligible for special education services through that eligibility category, the resources provided were very relevant.

Now Naomi's 14 years old, and just earned a B in Freshman English Class. She's an avid reader (sometimes during math class...) and building strong writing and speech skills with a supportive special education team.

I am excited that Oregon is considering a more inclusive definition of brain injury for the purpose of special education services. I'm empathetic to families who have experienced brain injury in their children and have to jump through additional, unnecessary hoops to secure the services their children need. Certainly all brain injuries are unique, but they also all impact learning and need appropriate intervention. I see this bill as a positive step in that direction.

With appreciation,

Dana Hepper  
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