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On Behalf Of: Sacred Organizing Coalition
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953

Starting in 1976, through 2006, I taught special education students at elementary, middle school, high school, and post-high levels. Some had “only” learning disabilities, others had developmental disabilities, hearing impairment, communication disorder, autism, behavior challenges, seizure disorder, cerebral palsy.

You need to know that each child DID learn. Whether learning academic or community skills, making progress in interdependent communication or independent living, job training or shopping practice, these students needed skilled educators and specific, direct instruction in order to make better progress.

However, there are children whose learning is impaired, and kids whose behavior intervention needs are not adequately addressed. I’ve worked with many children struggling to read or understand math. It’s different when a child’s brain struggles to cope with pre-natal damage, with trauma, with sensory overload, with fears or other factors.

Teachers and assistants know the challenges and joys — like families deal with — every day. But school teams sometimes need info and support from others — like a speech/language pathologist, behavior specialist, physical/occupational therapist, autism specialist, or nurse.

During my 30 years of teaching and consulting, we developed some awesome teamwork, but we also found out some peers were kinder than others, administrators were more open-minded than others, and some families were stretched beyond what they could do.

You are here to learn the needs of our state and its people. You cannot have first-hand knowledge about every concern. Yet some of you DO know. Someone in your family, a neighbor, a friend, certainly many of your constituents have children with some special need.

We cannot meet those real needs when held to an out-dated “cap” on the percentage of children who will receive services. Funding must grow for today’s children, who will soon be tomorrow’s adults. Look for people to be customers, employees, co-workers, friends, and community neighbors.