

## Support of HB 2448

Good afternoon Chair Neron, Vice Chairs Dobson and McIntire, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today in support of HB 2448.

For the record, My name is **Hayley Palmer**, and I am the mother of **Mila, my bright and beautiful 8-year-old daughter** who experiences significant disabilities stemming from a brain injury during birth. These include Cerebral Palsy, epilepsy, cortical visual impairment, global developmental delay, a feeding tube, and many other issues she lives with every day. I am here today not only as a parent but as someone who is **terrified** to send my child to public school.

I should not feel this way. No parent should.

Despite Mila being school-aged, I have yet to enroll her in public, in-person school because of the **countless horror stories I've heard from other parents in my community**—stories of children being **neglected, harmed or denied the services they desperately need** simply because the **resources are not there**. These fears are not irrational. **They are founded on the lived experiences** of families just like mine.

These stories are **not isolated incidents**—they are warnings. Warnings that the system is **failing children like Mila** and that sending her to school could mean putting her **in harm's way**.

When I tried to navigate the **IEP process** in a district, I walked away with the **understanding that Mila would not be offered a nurse to assist her on the bus**. Instead, the staff asked if the **parents could handle transportation themselves**. This is the **reality of underfunded special education services**—where critical supports are unavailable, or families are asked to **fill in the gaps**. **That is not how an equitable public education system should function**.

As parents, **our number one job is to protect our children**. But for those of us with children who **cannot defend themselves, cannot tell us when something is wrong, and cannot advocate for their safety**, this responsibility carries an even greater weight. We are forced to ask ourselves impossible questions:

- **Will my child be safe at school?**
- **Will she get the care she needs?**
- **If something happens, will she even be able to tell me?**

The fact that I have to ask these questions at all is unacceptable.

**Mila deserves an education like every other child, but I fear that the school system is unprepared** to meet her needs. **I do not fear the teachers. I do not fear the staff. I fear the lack of funding that keeps them from doing their jobs effectively—how they want to**. The **lack of highly trained personnel, the lack of adequate resources, and the lack of necessary support** are what keep parents like me up at night.

**HB 2448 is a critical step toward fixing this.** This bill gives school districts the **resources** to provide the **intensive, individualized support students like Mila require.**

When I send my daughter to school, she will be **safe, supported, and allowed to learn and grow.** But that belief must be built on **action, not hope.** **This committee has the power to take that action.**

Please **vote YES on HB 2448** and move this bill forward. Parents like me should not have to choose between **education and safety**—our children deserve both.

Thank you.