

RECOVERY EDUCATION

Supporting students who have disabilities to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic

HF 965, Edelson
SF 1210, Duckworth

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the learning of many students who have disabilities. Despite the best efforts of teachers and staff, some students simply could not participate in distance learning due to the pandemic.

As a result, some students will need additional services and supports to address the ground they've lost during the pandemic and return to in-person learning with their peers.

Schools and families need the chance to develop plans to address students' needs arising out of the pandemic. Schools need support to provide those additional services.

This proposal will help students who have disabilities, whose learning was interrupted during the pandemic, make up for what they lost based on their individual needs and challenges by:

- Allowing for individualized determinations by IEP teams about whether a student lost ground during the pandemic and needs additional services
- Allowing IEP teams to determine how to best provide services ensuring flexibility based on student needs
- Providing funding to districts for Recovery Education services deemed necessary by IEP teams
- Allowing for a more equitable process that does not rely on proactive steps by families to address their childrens' learning loss

The only reason my son has not regressed in skills is because I am working with him daily on all key skill areas. If we had relied on the school program he would have fallen even further behind his peers and would not be ready to be starting Kindergarten.
- Parent in north metro district

My child would need additional in-person time. It has been 10 months (except the month of october) without an education. She cannot access distance learning and more of that will not help. She is in a tier 3 setting and has regressed in her education and her interactions during this period.
- Parent of a K-2 student



Recovery Education.

Supporting students who have disabilities to recover learning lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

House File 965. House Author, Rep. Edelson.

Senate File 1210. Senate Author, Sen. Duckworth.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the learning of many students who have disabilities. Despite the best efforts of teachers and staff, some students simply could not participate in distance learning due to the pandemic.

As a result, some students will need additional services and supports to address the ground they've lost during the pandemic and return to in-person learning with their peers.

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This proposal will help students who have disabilities, whose learning was interrupted during the pandemic, make up for what they lost based on their individual needs and challenges by allowing for individualized determinations by IEP teams about whether a student lost ground during the pandemic and needs additional services. It will allow IEP teams to determine how to best provide services ensuring flexibility based on student needs. It will provide funding to districts for Recovery Education services deemed necessary by IEP teams. It will allow for a more equitable process that does not rely on proactive steps by families to address their childrens' learning loss.

Story from a parent in a north metro district. The only reason my son has not regressed in skills is because I am working with him daily on all key skill areas. If we had relied on the school program he would have fallen even further behind his peers and would not be ready to be starting Kindergarten.

Story from a parent of a K-2 student. My child would need additional in-person time. It has been 10 months (except the month of October) without an education. She cannot access distance learning and more of that will not help. She is in a tier 3 setting and has regressed in her education and her interactions during this period.

Bill supporters.

Autism Society of Minnesota.

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid.

Minnesota Disability Law Center.

Multicultural Autism Action Network.

PACER Center.

Proof Alliance.

The Arc Minnesota.



March 25, 2021

Chair Davnie
443 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Special Education Recovery Services and Support Plan House File 965

Dear Chair Davnie and members of the committee,

When schools closed in spring 2020, all students—particularly those historically underserved—were impacted. Gaps in internet and device access, varying levels of student participation, worries about mental health and social-emotional learning have left students and families concerned about the long-term implications. This is particularly true for students with disabilities. EdAllies analyzed 91 distance learning plans that defined what learning would look like for more than 500,000 Minnesota students. Of the plans we reviewed, only 40% explained how they would meet the needs of students with disabilities.

EdAllies supports HF965 because it would provide needed support and long-term planning for students with disabilities. In particular, we support:

- District short and long-term recovery planning for students with disabilities;
- Collaborating with parents to create an individualized recovery plan, including specific planning to address learning loss;
- The Commissioner of Education issuing guidance to districts and charter schools about the services and supports that may be provided to students with disabilities; and
- State investment to help districts and charter schools provide support to students with disabilities.

To make sure we are not leaving our most vulnerable students behind, it's important to do intentional and individualized planning to make sure that our students with disabilities are getting the support they need moving forward to ensure they are not adversely affected by COVID-19's impact on learning. HF965 does this.

If you have any questions or need any additional information, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Shaver".

Matt Shaver
Policy Director



March 24, 2021

Dear Chair Davnie and Committee Members,

We are writing today in support of HF 965/SF1210 which provides recovery education for students with disabilities who were unable to benefit from distance learning during the pandemic. We are grateful to Representative Edelson for bringing this bill forward.

Over the past year we have heard stories from hundreds of families of children with disabilities that have struggled with distance learning. In many cases, despite the best efforts of teachers and staff, students with disabilities simply have not been able to benefit from distance learning. We have heard from families that have struggled to access technology, students for whom working from a screen is simply untenable, families of multiple children with parents simply don't have the bandwidth to support their children's need, and many cases where parents have cut back on hours or dropped out of the workforce all together to support their children's needs.

This bill to provide a mechanism for recovery education is critically important for several reasons:

- 1) It provides a proactive mechanism to make up for what was lost available to all students with IEPs.
- 2) It is a more equitable and less adversarial solution than the existing compensatory education system, which requires families to file a formal complaint, go through a hearing, and find fault on the part of the school.
- 3) It avoids the time, expense, and paperwork demands of the formal complaint process.
- 4) It provides a funding mechanism to ensure that districts are reimbursed for additional services.

We have been reminded many times throughout the pandemic that while the virus does not discriminate, it does not affect all individuals equally. This bill would take one step towards recovering what was lost by students with disabilities.

We extend thanks to Representative Edelson, for bringing this bill forward and to Representatives Bierman, Huot, Moller, Christenson and Feist for serving as co-authors and we urge your support for this critical bill.

Sincerely,

Fatima Molas, Chairperson
Abyan Ali, Board Member
Maren Christenson Hofer, Board Member

Delia Samuel, Vice Chair
Rufo Jiru, Board Member



Minnesota Autism Council

Working Group of the Senate Human Services Reform Committee

February 10, 2021

Dear Minnesota Legislators,

Executive

Committee

Chair

Jules Edwards

WHEREAS The Minnesota Autism Council recognizes that, despite often heroic efforts by teachers and staff, distance learning has not been working for many students with disabilities and many students have not been able to participate in distance learning in a way that benefits them;

Vice Chair

Tom Cox

WHEREAS, research has documented that students with disabilities, students of color, and students from lower economic strata frequently have poorer outcomes from distance learning than the general student population;

Policy Liaison

Maren Christenson

Hofer

WHEREAS, the Council recognizes a need to ensure that students who have lost months of educational time should be provided with an opportunity to make up for that lost time;

Member Advocate

Jean Bender

WHEREAS, legal processes exist to provide “compensatory education,” but these processes remain inaccessible for many;

Recording Secretary

Tiffany Tully

WHEREAS, advocacy organizations have proposed a mechanism to which would direct districts to proactively offer “make-up”; or recovery education to students who were not able to benefit from distance learning during the pandemic. This would take the burden off of families to prove a student’s educational loss during the pandemic and instead create a mechanism for school districts to proactively offer recovery services;

Committee Staff:

Tom Brennan

(651) 434-2797

WHEREAS, this effort is intended to be funded through federal Covid Relief Funds;

WHEREAS, The Council believes this to be a more equitable distribution method than the current model, which advantages those families with the most access and resources, and disadvantages those with the least;

THEREFORE, The Minnesota Autism Council resolves to support legislation brought forward by advocacy organizations including The Arc MN, The Disability Law Center, and the Multicultural Autism Action Network that would create a mechanism to complement the existing compensatory education processes and direct districts to provide pro-active educational support for those students who regressed, did not meet goals, or were otherwise unable to benefit from distance learning during the pandemic.

Jules Edwards, Chairperson
Minnesota Autism Council

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Jessica Slominski and I live in North Oaks, MN. In a typical school year, my son receives full time one-on-one support from a paraprofessional. He is multiple grades below level and has difficulty focusing, mild intellectual disability and delayed gross, fine and speech skills.

Before school starting, I asked for in-home support and was originally told no. After the MDE's release regarding "Qualified Community Providers", I once again asked for in-person support. At this point, my request is still be looked into (we are in the Turtle Lake Elementary/Mounds View School District.) My son is currently receiving only 20 minutes of one-on-one support. He is not able to follow along or complete tasks required of his Gen Ed class. If I leave him at the computer, he will close it and go about his preferred tasks of playing. I do not have the expertise to teach him nor the time to do so.

I also have a 2 year old with severe CP who relies on me 100% of the time, a 3 year old, a Kindergartner who is distance learning and a 7th grader also full time distance learning. I have been unable to find someone to employ to assist me during these difficult times. Without one-on-one in home support of a qualified professional, my son will be left to a wasted year of an education experience that he is not able to participate in and will continue to fall even further behind his peers.

I was really disappointed that our school would not provide in-home support for my son - even just 3 hours a day. I hired a tutor and paid for her out of my own pocket, but even that was not ideal because she was just a college grad looking for short term work - she had no experience teaching, let alone teaching a child with extra needs. My son currently gets anywhere from 1.5 hours to 2 hours of online para/SPED zoom calls a day and that is it. He does not do any of the Gen Ed classes because it was just too hard for him. It's been a difficult year for sure.

I'm so exhausted trying to fit in our 15 weekly therapies between my 2 special kiddos and distance learning has made it that much worse. I appreciate your leadership in championing this issue and thank you for support HF 965/SF 1210.

Sincerely

Jessica Slominski
North Oaks 55126

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Amanda Collins and I live in Shoreview, district 42A. I am writing to request your support of HF 965 / SF 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

My child was provided with a generic IEP adjustment in the spring and summer of 2020 that did not take into account any individualized plan. The adjustments for the school year 20/21, while a little more individualized, removed the majority of direct and indirect services for PT, OT, hearing impaired, DAPE, and speech. He currently only receives 15 minutes of speech services a week and periodic email check ins on goals from the remaining specialists. He has been able to obtain time each day with either a special education teacher and para, but again greatly reduced from the hours that he would have received had he been in school in person.

Materials provided on a daily basis for his inclusive classroom live and on your own sessions are provided without any para support that would have occurred within school to make the necessary accommodations to allow him to access the lessons with his class. His IEP included a 1:1 para. That 1:1 full time para responsibility has fallen on us. This requires us to spend at least 30 minutes every morning reviewing all videos and lesson instructions and assess how best to accommodate and teach him the content for the day. Luckily I am working from home and have some flexibility to work evenings and weekends to make up hours I spend with him each day, along with having support 3 days a week from his grandmother. Without our support and coverage over the full school day he would not be able to access any of his lessons.

The only reason distance learning is working for my child is because we have created an at home plan with full time coverage by a family member to act as his full time para to allow him to access virtual school. This has at times required me to take vacation hours so that he had coverage for all live meetings and assistance for all on your own assignments. Our family not only has taken on the responsibility of his para, but have also had to cover the gaps in PT/DAPE, OT, and speech work on a weekly basis. We have also had to act as a sign language interpreter. His IEP included training his team on his frequently used ASL words and phrases. With the move to distance learning in the fall none of this was done which until he recently received a BAHA device required us to repeat and sign instructions to him and interpret his signed replies to questions. We are hoping the state will implement guidance to reduce the burden on individual families from filing and managing individual complaints with districts through the state.

My student needs time with PT/DAPE, OT, and speech therapists to work on goals that they have not spent any time with him on during this school year. He also needs individual learning opportunities with a special education teacher or para to work on gaps that have been created in his readiness for the next grade because of the virtual platform and reduction in the hours they planned to spend with him this year.

While he may not appear behind in some areas because he is close to meeting some of his current year goals, his lack of hours with his team has caused him to fall behind in other areas of learning that were not written as specific goals in his IEP because they were areas that would have been covered by his access to an inclusive classroom and full time para. Even with any extra hours or support over the rest of the school year and summer his team has already agreed that he will likely not be ready to move into 1st grade next year. If we repeat a grade to set him up for success as he moves through school we will be giving up a year on the end of his education journey which is not fair to him, but pushing him ahead when he is not ready because the school failed him during COVID, also is not fair to him.

Thank you for your leadership. Please support HF 965 / SF 1210.

Amanda Collins, mother to a Kindergarten son with disabilities

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Amy Fields and I have two children we adopted out of foster care with neurodiverse and physical needs.

When COVID hit our community my children were transitioned to a home platform and services for both, but especially my youngest with severe needs were cut. My youngest daughter is blind, has CP, vanishing brain, and a natural love for learning. We had been getting homebound services, which were already bare bones as is but this yanked the rug out from under us. My children require hours of PT, OT, Speech, and Vision services. We got minutes. 10 to 15 minutes of zoom time and some services were zeroed out.

Not only were the services lost so was any real education. Despite her disabilities my daughter loves to learn. She is able to learn at a kindergarten and first grade level but she was only presented with a watered down preschool curriculum. Her love of learning died.

As the parent I was expected to become a special education teacher and do all the work with both of my children. I am adaptable. To reignite my daughter's love of learning and to support my son who is way below grade level I became a teacher. I ignored school work and focused on what my children could do. I spent 80 hours a week making and implementing lessons, supports, and seeing my children through. I paid for outside services, doubled up therapies, and picked up the district's slack.

Now that it is safe to provide in home services our district still will not do so. Services continue to be a struggle and I have to justify through endless and fruitless IEP meetings why we need PT, OT, Speech, and Vision. If I had not worked around the clock my kids would be even further behind.

I am asking the House Education Committee to support House File 965/SF1210 because it is critically important to families like ours.

Thank you for your time,

Amy Fields
amyfields417@yahoo.com
(804)-714-4584

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

Our family lives in Champlin and we have two children with special needs. Prior to COVID-19, our older son attended 4th grade at a small charter school in Champlin and our younger son attended 1st grade at our public school in the Anoka Hennepin district. Each child has a detailed IEP as they each have complex needs. When schools first closed last March, within approximately 24 hours, they lost every support that we've spent years developing. Their schools closed, their occupational therapy clinic closed, their behavioral therapy clinics closed, and the pool that is vital to meeting their sensory needs closed. Amongst other diagnoses, both of my children are on the autism spectrum, which is already a very underserved population. We've spent years on waiting lists waiting to access the support that they desperately need, as research continuously shows that early intervention is the most effective. To have all of their supports crumble at the same time was heartbreaking beyond words!

Both the public school and the charter school struggled to navigate distance learning and they offered our family a list of independent activities that we could do at home. Both my husband and I work full time, so we did not have the materials, training, or prep time to instantly become a teacher, special education teacher, behavior therapist, speech therapist, social skills instructor, speech therapist, etc. overnight. We are fortunate to have basic school supplies, but did not have a curriculum, manipulatives, textbooks, or any of the hands on/tactile materials that our children need to learn. Other than the list of activities that we could choose to prepare and conduct at home, there were no supports (virtually, in person, or otherwise) offered and the IEPs essentially felt like they didn't exist. They were not offered social skills groups, speech therapy, etc. on a virtual basis until more recently, so they went many months without support from a trained professional.

Due to my own health issues, our children have continued with distance learning. Both of our children now attend the charter school because navigating distance learning at two different schools was impossible. Despite our best efforts, both children have regressed educationally, emotionally, and socially. Although their teachers are caring and kind, our opinion is that distance learning students are essentially invisible. The dedicated teachers are exhausted by trying to keep up with the needs of kids in school and do not have the time or resources to support children via distance learning, especially children with special needs who cannot participate virtually without full 1:1 support. The only saving grace for our family was the extensive support of our extended family. My parents were able to stop working and help us full time, and my sister cut her hours to work on a part time basis so that they could all provide support for distance learning.

I am willing to share more details of the extensive toll this past year has taken on our family if you'd like more information. We are begging for more funding and support to the schools to help them support families like ours attempt to recover some of the educational opportunities that have been lost. Please vote to support the Special Education Recovery Bill, HF 965.

Sara Laube
763-670-2808
11319 Florida Ave N
Champlin, MN 55316

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

I would like to speak out on how distance-learning has affected our family and my son. I am single mother to a severely autistic child who has co-morbid diagnoses that have not been addressed just yet.

My son is probably the most complex autistic child in Hennepin County. The past year has been hell. We started out with two days a week in person at school and ended up with one day a week in person at school. I had to advocate for two more days a week before the school opened up again. I did have an attorney who was working on getting us more than one day a week.

My son could not do distance-learning. 85% of the time he could not comply. He would end up screaming all over the floor and I would have to disconnect. Thank God I work for my son, otherwise I would've lost my job. I don't know how anybody else has done it. I am a paid parent so I am a PCA for my son. I have gotten no respite and my PTSD has been through the roof. We have been to the hospital at least five times this year with one ending up being a six week inpatient psych admit. Other times we ended up in the ER for weeks at a time with no beds available.

It is a vicious cycle in Minnesota and there's no solution for children like my son. They just do not get help. The families of children like this end up abused or there is severe psychological illness and sometimes it ends up with suicide with some families.

So let's not talk about how COVID-19 has killed people but let's talk about how the psychological illness has killed people and left people with severe PTSD and trauma. Let's talk about a child is having surgery tomorrow because he broke his front tooth off slamming it in the bathroom and how it took two months to get the scheduled when he's in pain. Due to COVID-19 guidelines nothing is easy. It could've been a lot easier if we would've kept our kids in school and we need to make up for that time lost now.

Thanks for listening and the teachers in my sons school has been nothing but helpful. It's definitely not their fault but we need to make up for what was lost. Please support HF 965/SF1210.

God bless,
Nadine and son Matthew Monge

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Christina Aubrey and I am from Buhl, MN.

Having children work from home who have a disability is a struggle right now especially when it come to deciding whether or not to send them to school physically.

As a parent who opted for distance learning, the active supports of peers, teachers, paras and all staff in the school system are now gone. My children are missing that structure and support from all everyone around who not only model good behavior for learning but also how to interact in a social setting.

With distance learning we as parents are left to step into of these roles at once because frankly there isn't a GOOD working plan in place for students like my children.

Maybe there needs to be a program similar to one like the early headstart program where a para or teacher meets in the students home once a week, who follows strict Covid guidelines and protocols.

Please support HF965/SF1210 so families like ours have a chance.

Sincerely,

Christina Aubrey

tinaestella@yahoo.com

Dear Chair Davnie and Committee Members,

As the parent of a medically complex child whose doctor recommended we keep him home, we chose to distance learn even though our district started full-time face-to-face.

Over the last 5 days we have been included in his classroom learning for 15 minutes, even though he is supposed to be synchronous with his class. We keep being told that they are "setting up routines". His IEP services are being covered with 3 - 20 minute Google Meet sessions a day. Basically that means he is getting 60 minutes of education a day. That's it! He is entitled to FAPE, which is not even close to happening.

We need your help to make up for what was lost. It has been a disaster. Please support HF 965/SF 1210 so that we have a chance.

Sincerely,

Parent who wishes to remain anonymous

Dear Chairman Davnie and Education Committee Members,

As you consider House File 965/Senate File 1210, please know that the passage of this legislation will positively impact the education of my daughter and many children just like her that have special education needs and developmental delays.

My daughter Aviana seriously struggled with remote learning over the past school year. She has a rare genetic disorder that impacts her ability to communicate and process information, remote instruction was a complete and utter failure. While her teachers and aids tried in earnest to provide instruction virtually, she digressed in her education and abilities.

Aviana did not want to participate, to the point of crying because she wanted the google meet to stop, her frustrations were so high. It was troubling for my wife and I to see our daughter digress, and nothing we could do about it.

This bill will provide critical funds to recovery services that will provide my daughter increased in person education in the hope it will make up for all the classroom time she missed. I am pleading with the committee to please pass this bill, because my daughter and many children just like her need additional help in the hope they can catchup.

Thank you,

Rick Aviles
Edina, MN

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

I am asking for your support for the House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students with disabilities.

My son is in his last year of a special education transitions program and he was going to complete a year of a job training at a local business but was not able to because of the cancellation of in person programming.

My son is open enrolled in another district's transition program, he does not attend our home district #625, so I am not sure what was offered in Saint Paul Public Schools. The program he is enrolled in offered distance learning classes two or three times a week.

My son did not respond well to google meetings. It was very stressful for him to cope with the loss of in person interactions with staff and people at his job site. He would benefit from the chance to work at his job training site for another year as the next step for him is adult services: our plan was to see how much progress he made in his job training this year to help determine possible job placements for his future.

Thank you for considering this bill, it would have a big impact on my son's life.

Donna Carlson
Saint Paul, MN

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Angie Carpio and my child attends the Robbinsdale school district 281. I am writing to you about distance learning for children with disabilities.

It has been a mess. My son was open enrolled in Minneapolis for ECSE. I was in the process of getting his IEP updated for his kindergarten and home district Robbinsdale.

Robbinsdale ended up completely forgetting us. I have to keep hounding them. I am finally hopefully this week getting an appointment set up so we can update my son's IEP to his current district and for kindergarten.

I am flying blind. I have no idea what I'm doing. First child. I don't know what I am asking for. I don't even know what his services will look like or what they are even providing. I guess I find out soon.

My son has an IEP for ASD and language/speech delay. He needs another evaluation for OT services. I have been asking for a while but we will see with covid if that will happen. Please support HF 965/SF1210 so families have a voice.

Sincerely,

Angie Carpio
carpioa84@gmail.com

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

As the mother of four children with disabilities, I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

I feel like my district tried everything they could, with the exception of the one thing that would have made a difference: in-person supports. We had schedule changes for more 1:1 time, less live meets, more live meets, fewer breaks between meets, longer breaks between meets, asynchronous days. So much time and effort was spent trying to figure out how to replace in-person support, and it was all unsuccessful.

None of my kids connected with distance learning, and with kids in three grades, on two different bell schedules, each day was a lesson in futility. I had to constantly make the decision of who was going to get my 1:1 support- the 1st grader who does not know his letters and numbers? The 6th graders who have gone down spiral of sensory dysregulation? The 5th grader who refuses to log in to anything except for his 1-hour appointment with his mental health therapist? Most days started in arguing and chaos, and then went south from there as I begged and pleaded with each of them to engage in something for two minutes at a time. Every hour of the day was tense, as we worried about every thing they were falling behind on.

I actually started talking with MDE about our issues, but they said there was nothing they could do to compel our district to provide in-person services, so I felt like the point was moot. They will need access to extra academic time to rebuild the skills they lost, and catch up with their peers. They will need access to supports to help them re-learn how to “do” school.

Thank you for always listening to my experiences, and always voting with my kids in mind.
Please support HF 965/SF 1210

Sincerely,
Erin Clotfelter
Minneapolis, MN
District 60A

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Carrie Delaney and I live in Rochester, MN.

I am writing to you today to ask for your support for House 965/Senate File 1210 for Recovery Education for students with disabilities.

Our school district handed us the work packet for our son and told us "Good Luck." There has been absolutely no learning during this school year, and we have already filed a formal complaint.

Our son will need to gain further peer to peer contact for Social Emotional Support, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Hands-on work that he missed through SPED.

Please pass this bill so families like mine do not have to fight to get back what is needed for their children to succeed, be given the tools to excel and grow in their environment. My son has lost extremely important and valuable time. This is devastating because my son's needs are intensive and set backs like (for some) may simply be a loss of 14 weeks of school---for us, it sets us back a couple years! This is completely unacceptable.

IEPS ((Individualized Education Plans) are legal binding documents and were completely dismissed and pushed back as if they don't even matter. Kids with disabilities are so forgotten, and I am losing faith that anyone cares.

Please support HF 965/SF1210.

Thank you for your leadership and please pass this bill.

Carrie Delaney

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

I am writing to request that you comply with the ADA and support House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of EVERY student who presents with a physical, neurological or other disability in the state of Minnesota.

The school district SPED department created a Google classroom for my son to self initiate access to para support and communication with the SPED teacher. This "classroom" was unmonitored and there was little to no initiation of contact from the SPED teacher. Contact from SPED was limited to non-existent. SPED would pose an intermittent social skills question to students in Google Classroom but that was it.

My son needs direct access to his SPED teachers for social skills enrichment and teaching, academic support from SPED to teach what was lost in core classes with the absence of para support, support with making progress on IEP goals that were suspended due to distance learning and improved support for his transition services that were delayed due to distance learning.

I would like my elected official to recognize the importance of these Files for the success of Minnesota school districts ability to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities.

Please support HF 965/SF1210 to make sure parents have a voice in what happens next.

Sincerely,
Debi Ebner-Tougas
Wadena, MN

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members.

My name is Vanessa Foster and I am a resident of Minneapolis, MN, district 61.

I am writing to express my appreciate for your support for house file 965/Senate file 1210 regarding Recovery education for students with disabilities.

It took months to get services up and running, coordinating Mps schools and Mpls kids essential worker care.

I have no idea what it would take to get us back where we need to be, but at a minimum it will take summer school and more funding, as always.

Please support House file 965/Senate File 1210.

Thank you,

Vanessa Foster
District

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members.

My name is Jackie Hanson and I live in St. Paul. I am writing to ask you to please support HF 965/senate file 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

Our IEP was completely void during distance learning. We did not receive any services at all from our school and we need more one-on-one time to make up for what was lost as well as OT.

Thank you for your leadership and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Jackie Hanson

Dear Chair Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Alyssa Horvat and my child attends Hibbing High School.

My child needs to be in person school at least 4 days a week to learn something this year. She cannot go on google meets or do any of her work unless I am home because she can't navigate the iPad in that aspect on her own.

I also work so she misses out on all google meets, and zoom meetings, etc.. that happen during the day. (8-5). The school offered to give her para an iPad and then she and my child can FaceTime from my computer and do work that way but again that can only be done when I am home to assist with technology and making sure she and the para are on the same assignment, etc.. It is very difficult to do distance learning with out proper supports.

Please support HF 965/SF1210 so we can make up for what was lost.

Alyssa Horvat

Alyssajhorvat@gmail.com

Dear Chair Davnie and Education Committee,

My name is Cassandra Kallis and I am writing to you from Wayzata to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

Our school district provided materials for my children to use at home, as well as Zoom group and individual lessons, but distance learning was a disaster for my children. My sons with special needs require occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy. They were unable to receive this at home because I simply did not have the time or expertise to implement these therapies. My children are not able to sit and attend to lessons on the computer and I could not manage both of their learning at home, in addition to their physical and emotional needs.

My children with special needs need extra physical therapy, speech therapy and occupational therapy to make up for the months that they lost. They also need their special education instruction increased to make up for the behavioral and academic goals that they will not meet this year due to distance and hybrid learning.

Thank you for your time and your leadership. Please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Sincerely,
Cassandra Kallis
Plymouth, MN

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Emily Kline and I live in St Paul.

My child hasn't been able to participate in school at all. She has severe adhd and is only 6 so she just presses random buttons on her iPads and won't comply to doing any of the assignments.

This is how it was last spring. She is repeating kindergarten this year and it's the same. Likely I will have to find a tutor and pay out of pocket and have her do other work not on her iPad.

She really can only do in person work in a school environment. She won't do it with me at home. Please support HF 965 /SF 1210 so we can make up for what was lost.

Sincerely,

Emily Kline,
Emilykline123@gmail.com

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Marissa Lang and I live in St. Paul, MN. I am writing to you today in support of SF 1210.

My 10th grader currently has a 504 plan with accommodations for a variety of mental health conditions. I requested an academic assessment in order to receive an IEP in September 2020 because he needs additional accommodations for virtual learning, as well as support moving forward in high school in order to be able to graduate.

I finally received an email and call back from the SE coordinator on March 3rd 2021- six months after my initial request to St. Paul Public Schools due to the backlog of families trying to receive support.

Due to his anxiety and panic disorder he is afraid to turn on his camera for class, if he participates at all in virtual leaning. I currently spend up to 10 hours a week with him on school work, in addition to my regular job and family life.

Please support HF 965 to help students with disabilities make up for what was lost during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Marissa Lang

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about my 5 year old deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) son. He was impacted by COVID while attending a special education program (pre-K) at Rochester Public Schools (RPS). I hope my story encourages you to support the Recovery Education Bill (House File 965/Senate File 1210), so children like my son have the opportunity to receive 'recovery services' from disruptions to on-site instruction because of COVID.

Early learning programs for DHH students provide intensive services that prepare them for Kindergarten by teaching them self-advocacy skills so they can more effectively access (hear) information. During a normal school year the Hoover Early Learning School at RPS offers specialized instruction taught in two preschool settings five days/wk. My son attends the "learn to listen" class, a small group with up to 8 students 3 days a week. Small group focuses on self-advocacy skills for social emotional growth with other hard of hearing peers. According to the MN Commission of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, DHH students "need opportunities to communicate and connect socially with other peers who are deaf and hard of hearing." Two days a week DHH students attend the "large group" classroom with up to 16 students where they practice self-advocacy with normal hearing peers in a preschool general education setting. Both of these classes offer learning opportunities that cannot be provided in a distance learning model.

Due to COVID my hard of hearing son was:

- Isolated in small group without any peers from during hybrid 2 days/wk because enrollment was down; from 9/2020 to 12/2020,
- Denied access to attend a large group/general education classroom during hybrid and distance learning, since the nursery preschool closed. In addition, the school district never offered an alternative large group/general education classroom options 2 days/wk. We were told another class was not available; from 9/2020 to 1/2021,
- Offered the option beginning Jan 1st to attend either small group, or large group—but, not both during hybrid. The district required the parent to pick one service over another when both supports (small/large group) were documented in his approved Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- Lumped into a "one-size fits all" district decision, ignoring Governor Walz Safe Learning Plan, which encouraged every early learning program to operate an in-person or hybrid learning model with additional mitigation strategies as early as January 18th 2021.
- Denied access to attend in-person learning more frequently, even with a parent written request to attend both small group and large group during hybrid up to 4 days a week. The district stated students were not allowed to mix pods even though my son only had less than 2 peers in the small group classroom and enrollment in general education was capped at 8 students; from February to 3/2021.

To support items mentioned above I'd like to point out Governor Walz and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) offered guidance for students with disabilities and a plan to return to school in MDE's 2020-21 School Year Planning Guidance. A few key points are summarized below:

- note page 46: Prioritizing In-Person Support and Services, which states Per Executive Order 20-94, school districts operating in a distance or hybrid learning model that are providing in-person services in accordance with public health guidelines must prioritize providing in-person instruction and services to students with disabilities whose individualized education program calls for intensive services that cannot be provided in a distance learning model.
- note page 47: During hybrid learning, students with disabilities could attend at the school site more frequently, up to full-time. Consideration given if the student was 'unable to access or successfully receive' special education or related services and general education instruction through distance learning."

Distance learning was tough because my son was the only student for a period of time, then when more students attended small group the time switched so as a working parent it was difficult to balance the needs for assistance and work. Daycare was able to accommodate his participation, but once the time changed it was more difficult for him to attend. I'm not sure what the quality of his hearing was through iPad school, but we were able to Bluetooth it. Possibly, depending upon what it entails. My son will transition to K this fall, so what would result from filling a complaint? I'm not sure I have the correct information to support one.

My son's greatest need is to make up time lost in the general education (large group) preschool setting, but he also did experience isolation (only student) for half of the school year in small group. He lost experiences that would allow him to work on early childhood social, emotional, and behavioral goals. Goal 2 in his approved IEP supported his ability to improve his auditory comprehension skills from limited participation in routine classroom auditory activities to using auditory cues to learn new information, respond to adult and peer questions, participate in routine preschool auditory activities, and achieve developmental speech and language milestones.

Here are some ideas that would give my son exposure to "recovery services" lost due to in-person disruptions from COVID:

- 1 – Ability to attend the full day general education classroom now before the end of the 2021 school year if appropriate,
- 2 – Attend summer school 5 days/wk in a general education setting with hearing peers and good language role models in a private or public school,
- 3 – Attend a variety of summer camps so he can practice socializing, listening in different environments to gain experiences practicing his compensatory skills before he enters kindergarten.
- 4 – Ability to attend SACC before or after school in the Fall of 2021 so he has more time to socialize with peers in a school setting.

I know my son is not the only hard of hearing student in Minnesota that suffered disruptions to access in-person instruction due to COVID. As a passionate parent, I'm advocating for ALL hard of hearing children who lost the opportunity to learn and practice self-advocacy skills unique to their disability. Please support the Recovery Education Bill (House File 965/Senate File 1210) and help them 'receive recovery services' so they can ALL be successful on their educational journey.

Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Nicole Lehman
Rochester

Distance learning was tough because my son was the only student for a period of time, then when more students attended small group the time switched so as a working parent it was difficult to balance the needs for assistance and work. Daycare was able to accommodate his participation, but once the time changed it was more difficult for him to attend. I'm not sure what the quality of his hearing was through iPad school, but we were able to Bluetooth it. Possibly, depending upon what it entails. My son will transition to K this fall, so what would result from filling a complaint? I'm not sure I have the correct information to support one.

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Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Nicole Lehman
Rochester

Dear Chair Davnie and committee members,

My name is Toni Malone and I am a resident of Maplewood, MN.

I am writing to you to thank you for your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

Our school district made a moderate attempt to work with our student who has a disability, but despite that effort, distance learning did not work for us.

In order to make up for what was lost we would need compensatory hours for skills lost AND hours to experience community integration.

Thank you for your leadership, and your support of House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Sincerely,

Toni Malone, constituent
District 53

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Ashley Meek and I am writing to you from Elko, MN to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

Our school district sent a tablet home for virtual learning and sent some supplies home to do work with parents, but that was all. Distance learning did not really work for our family.

In order to make up for what was lost our child would need more 1:1 time in person more often than two 3 hour days.

Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Sincerely,

Ashley Meek
Lakeville

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members.

My name is Jessica Merchant and I am a resident of Farmington, MN (District 58).

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities, like my son William.

Our school attempted to work with my son by offering flexible scheduling of zoom meetings, dropping off supplies, flexible learning activities at home and via zoom. But in the end, none of these things worked very well.

He doesn't/isn't able to participate well during a zoom call, and cannot work independently at all. He needs physical 1:1 assistance with everything, and cognitively has a hard time understanding that there are people on the zoom call. His attention span is also very short (1-2 minutes max), and the environment of a zoom call (often loud and chaotic at times) is distressing and causes him to shut down. There was very little his teachers could do remotely/virtually to connect with him, especially for the first half of distance learning.

In order to make up for what was lost our child needs an extended in-person school year. He is currently signed up for regular ESY services, but it's only a few weeks this summer.

Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Jessica Merchant

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

Distance learning was not an effective solution for the delivery for my son's IEP and there has been no discussion of offering compensatory services for my son.

Formal complaints at the state and federal department of education levels have been disregarded and ignored. He will need compensatory services that are completed outside of regular school hours and possibly by a third party. He will need tutoring, behavioral therapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy. Completing these additional services during regular school hours will limit his in class time which is very important to him.

Please pass these bills in support of all special needs students in order to make up for the necessary in person learning that was lost during this unique time.

Sincerely,
Nathan R Paul
Maple Grove, MN

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Heidi Raymond and I live in Anoka in district 6.

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities

We have had virtual no contact from our school at all this year. We contacted the school many times and were told there were no other teachers available for online SPED support.

Our daughters would need at least 3 to 6 months of one on one tutoring/support to make up for what was lost.

Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Heidi Raymond

Dear Chair Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Leilani Stoltzman and I live in, Zimmerman MN (district 31).

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

During distance learning it felt like special education was an after thought. There was nothing properly in place to meet IEP in reasonable ways.

Distance learning was a disaster for my child. Special education services was a huge challenge for the school, our family and my student during distance learning time. Needs were not properly met.

To be perfectly honest I find the complaint process full of so much red tape that it becomes more exhausting than it's worth.

I honestly I don't know what we would need to make up for what was lost, but distance learning set my child back academically, emotionally, and psychologically. His already fragile mental health suffered more than I can express.

One thing that would benefit special education overall is better training for ALL staff working with special needs children. Including mainstream teachers, paras, school social workers, everyone. There is not enough focus on continuing education for those working with our children.

Please support House File 965/Senate File 1210, and thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,
Leilani Stoltzman
District 31

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

My child is a 2E learner in the process of getting an IEP. She attends Lionsgate Academy in Shoreview, a charter school in it's own district. They offered one on one educational assistant in virtual classes, extra homework help hours before and after school as well as an always available chat option with their advisor.

If we were not distance learning I'm sure they would have started the IEP process at the beginning of the school year but because I took time away from work and stepped in to support her everyday it took several months for the school to see that her needs were at the level of an IEP.

Distance learning has gone fairly well for well for our family. It has made managing her complex medical condition easier but has been very hard to form new friendships and socialize. My daughter has been completely isolated because she is immunosuppressed and high risk. This has also kept her from services to maintain her health such as Occupational Therapy in a saltwater pool for hypermobility.

In order to make up for what has been lost we would like another year at this same school getting the full support to develop her scattered abilities before trying college. She's a junior now. One more year of full support would make a world of difference in being ready to succeed at college. We would need time to prepare and take ACT tests without the added pandemic stress.

Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Maureen Swenson
344 Minnehaha Ave E
St. Paul MN 55106

Dear Chairman Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Sonia Walters and I am a resident of Bloomington, MN. I am writing to you in support of HF 965/SF 1210.

In our case, the process of being evaluated for eligibility of special education services was disrupted and delayed by covid restrictions. The process to evaluate her and get services started took over a year! She qualified in two areas.

All evaluation was put on hold for months. The district was able to invite her in during the summer to provide some evaluation testing, however they were unable to observe her in the normal classroom at all since the district has been distance learning up until at least 3/2021. The online teaching was effective, when she finally received it.

In order to make up for what was lost my child will need more time with trained specialists to close the gap and help her with social/emotional communication, anxiety.

I support the legislative efforts to help children with disabilities and ask you to support HF 965/SF1210.

Sincerely,

Sonia Walters
Bloomington, MN

Dear Chair Davnie and Committee Members,

My name is Delia Thomas and I live in Roseau, MN.

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities.

Our school district did not provide enough and/or appropriate educational services for students with special needs and claim this is due to lack of staff on Fridays (Not following IEP as it is written - services for 5 days). They are only providing in person services for general education students who are falling behind on Fridays and not for Special Education.

They do not provide speech and language (teletherapy from speech partners) visual/data which they use to determine and to support the goals and cutting back on therapy services. Lack of communication.

He is in 11th grade and I have no idea as to what he is actually learning. There is no homework to carry over skill.

We are going on on our third meeting and are still trying to resolve issues. 1. Is he getting enough appropriate education services 2. Speech data 3. Baseline /list of words he's able to express and falling behind 4. ESY Awaiting for proposal. He's in 11th grade"

Last spring for 3 months/ Google meet with his previous speech and language pathologist and daily packet sent home to carry over skills. Not doing to well with new (speech partner therapist from North Carolina) but another therapist took over and doing better.

During last spring, he only had one day of speech therapy with speech therapist when IEP reads 5 days. As far as educational , they provided paper homework and google classroom but only contact with sped teacher once a week for 20 minutes to play bingo. There's Epic reading and the math app they provided was not working for him (too childish). And bad connection with McBook.

I did contact the MN Department of Education and did not get straight answers but they did provide a form how to file a complaint. I asked if school district can deny to provide data measured by staff or speech visual data and stated they are tools but not part of education record.

Next I contacted Pacer (advocate). They have not filed a complaint and told me to do so only it is necessary. Regardless of their level of skill or whether they posses a disability, people cannot be productive if they are unable to function in the society .

We need more autism awareness and train special education staff and district in charge of funds on understanding when to provide enough education appropriate services and stop using excuses as to not able to provide because it's inconvenient or lack of staff. We live in a rural area with very little resources and they need more educational training to understand their disability and provide appropriate education services!

Sincerely,
Delia Thomas

March 17, 2021

Dear Representative Wazlawik,

I am writing to ask you for your support the special education recovery bill, HF 965. As your constituent, I hope you recognize the critical importance of providing a mechanism for IEP teams to sit down and talk about the needs of students with disabilities that were not met during the pandemic.

I live in Hugo (14272 Evergreen Avenue North Hugo, MN 55038) and have three children in the White Bear Lake School District. Our 12 year old daughter, Alyssa, is disabled and medically fragile. Pre-Covid while things were tough, they were manageable. After schools shut down, despite herculean efforts to “work from home” and do distance learning with our three children, it became impossible. My husband is a pediatric RN at Gillette Children’s and there is little flexibility in his job. So, over the summer, I took a leave of absence from my position in state government to care for our kids and I officially resigned in September when it became clear schools were unable to open safely.

Alyssa is non-verbal, developmentally disabled and suffers from seizures. Any illness, such as a cough or runny nose, typically results in seizure activity for Alyssa. She has sensory issues and cannot keep a face mask on. She loves people but does not comprehend the concept of social distancing and insists on hugging and kissing people. When presented the opportunity to send her back to school, in good conscience and out of an abundance of care for Alyssa, her teachers and classmates, we felt distance learning was our only option. To protect Alyssa, we had to pull her two brothers out of in-person learning school options too.

My husband and I work in close collaboration with Alyssa’s school team and everyone went to great lengths support to Alyssa, but these efforts simply were not enough. At school, Alyssa would typically have a one on one support staff in addition to her instructor, but at home I was the teacher, para, cook, janitor and therapist! Her brothers can turn their computers on and off and complete lessons. For Alyssa, learning digitally means she cannot even access her classroom, let alone enjoy the social lessons that are sprinkled throughout her IEP. In the first few weeks of distance learning, Alyssa really did try to sit in front of the computer and watch videos with teachers and classmates, but now we are lucky if she will remain in the same room with the computer! Alyssa has regressed this past year and now she’s even afraid to go outside.

Since March 2020, we feel her “education” has really been more about problem solving digital and technical computer issues and giving Alyssa busy work (which she’s not supported enough to be able to complete). Our goal at home is to get Alyssa to sit at the computer as long as possible and now Alyssa is not interested in going through the motions with us anymore. Again, this is not the fault of teachers or parents. It is just the reality of trying to support a child with a disability who needs special accommodations. When those accommodations are impossible to

deliver the outcomes are impossible to achieve. That's why there is a formal process for making up for lost education called compensatory education. If all families of children who have disabilities were to use the compensatory education system, it would be very expensive and time consuming - for districts and for the state.

HF 965 could be life changing for people like our daughter Alyssa and so many others and that's why we support the recovery education bill and urge you to do the same.

Respectfully,



Zoua Vang

Mother of Alyssa Wong

559-392-4681