

Dear House Education Committee:

As you consider House File 965, please consider children with special needs that suffered disproportionately during this crisis. I am a mother of multiple school aged children, a kindergartner and a special needs second grader. My special needs child was unable to make the connection to virtual learning and regressed academically, behaviorally, and in her activities of daily living. I only hope that she can recover all that was lost and then start to progress again.

To illustrate some of our challenges, I would like to share some information about my child. She suffers from a rare genetic condition that impacts all of her motor planning skills. She is non-verbal and has fine motor delays, but she does have an ability to learn and had been making significant progress prior to distance learning. In the virtual environment, she required a parent to sit next to her one hundred percent of the time. (keep in mind I also needed to provide distance learning to a child in kindergarten and take care of an active toddler at the very same time). The parent would need to translate everything that was said by the teacher and then indicate back to the teacher whether or not the right choice was make.

Although the teachers tried, this was a highly frustrating process and resulted in many frustrated behaviors. My daughter had not displayed behavioral issues before, but in this environment I was regularly being hit/pinched/scratched. As a further display of frustration, she started having regular accidents although she had been potty trained for years. She lost all the connections that she had with people and would only want to play on her iPad. Fixing all of these problems created over the last year will take significant time and effort. The impact on her was far beyond what is consistent with her typical peers. Although her teachers tried, given her limitations she essentially had no education or services for over ten months.

I ask that you please pass this bill to provide the critical funds necessary to help my child and others like her recover.

Thank you,

Shannon Aviles
House District 49A