

Re: HB 2673

Dear Chair Doherty and Member of the House Education Committee:

My name is Todd Nicholson and I'm a school psychologist in the Beaverton School District. I have been a school psychologist for twelve years and have worked directly with students, parents, as well as multi-disciplinary evaluation and intervention teams. My professional life has been dedicated to improving educational and life outcomes for every child –especially our most vulnerable and challenged learners.

The proposed HB 2673, specifically section five changing initial and re-evaluation timelines from 60 school days to 60 calendar days would have a tremendous impact on the quality of the evaluation as well as the quality and appropriateness of interventions for students eligible for special education.

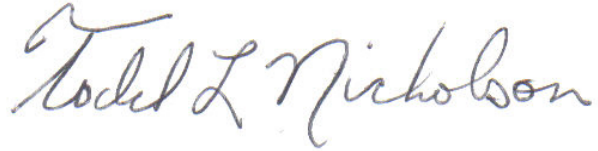
Psycho-educational evaluations are much different from psychological evaluations available in the community. Psycho-educational evaluations are tailored specifically to the educational concerns of the child referred. For example, in addition to evaluating a struggling student's cognitive processes, the evaluation also must seek to systematically analyze and evaluate a student's interaction with his or her educational environment. This takes time. *The better and more comprehensive the evaluation, the better and more informed the educational interventions.* Taking short cuts in this area leads to more educational failure, as the student would likely be given imprecise interventions and experience even more failure.

Without a doubt, you will receive comments from other educators, which will speak to the considerable burden, this will place on an already stretched special education system. I agree with these concerns and fear that overall, students will receive less instructional time –the professionals who conduct evaluations also provide services. To meet a 60 calendar day timeline would place special educators in the position of choosing how they are going to be out of compliance –providing services and interventions or conducting evaluations. Either way, they are out of compliance.

I was recently involved in a complex evaluation for a student who was found eligible for special education services under the category of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The evaluation necessitated nine specialists coordinating over 60 hours of evaluation. Of the 60 hours of evaluation, 74% of that time consisted of direct interaction with the student; the remaining time was spent in observing the student interacting with the educational environment and synthesizing the information for eligibility and intervention. In reality The team would have actually had less than 43 school days to complete the evaluation (weekends, holidays and absences). The student would experience 'test fatigue' which not only compromises the integrity of the evaluation, in fact would further harm the student's perception of herself.

A wise educator once remarked: "If the necessary groundwork for any intervention has not been laid, the likelihood the intervention will be successful is greatly reduced . . ." Comprehensive and thoughtful evaluation lays that groundwork. I urge you to consider these and other unintended consequences of HB 2673.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Todd L. Nicholson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'T'.

Todd Nicholson, NCSP
School Psychologist
Beaverton School District