

Written Testimony for HB 2673

The Special Education Directors from the Southern Oregon Region are writing to express our concerns related to the proposed HB 2673. Specifically, the condition to change the number of days a school district has to complete an initial evaluation or re-evaluation from 60 school days to 60 calendar days.

Below are some conditions that school districts and evaluators face when completing evaluations, for which you may not be aware.

* School staff do not work on weekends, legal holidays or scheduled school breaks (i.e. summer vacation, winter break and spring break). Thus, using calendar days instead of school days significantly reduces the number of days staff have access to conduct assessments and student observations, complete file reviews, score assessments, interview staff, interpret results, write evaluation reports and hold eligibility meetings.

* Due to student absences, observations and assessments often need to be rescheduled, because the evaluator does not have access to the student when they are absent.

*When a medical statement is required as part of an evaluation, it is often difficult getting the needed information from the medical providers in a timely fashion. As medical professionals also do not work on weekends and legal holidays, your proposal makes this an even more difficult process.

* When evaluating for multiple disabilities, we often have multiple evaluators assessing a student. These proposals would require Districts to cram all the assessments into a narrow timeframe, which would not allow for comprehensive evaluations, and the evaluations may not be valid if we are forced to over-test students in a small timeframe.

* These proposals also do not account for the students that have high rates of mobility and move in and out of multiple schools in a given school year.

* If a school district received signed consent to complete an evaluation on January 1, 2015, your proposal would make the due date March, 1, 2015. With holidays, weekends and grading days 23, calendar days would not be available to complete the evaluation (3 holidays, 1 grading day and 19 weekend days).

*These proposals will increase the need for more evaluators when school districts are already significantly underfunded for special education. Many of these positions are already difficult to recruit and retain, as there are national, state and local challenges in finding qualified staff. The proposals do not include increased funding for an increased mandate.

We would be happy to speak with you further on this matter.

Respectfully,

Special Education Directors from Southern Oregon

Tania Tong, Medford School District

Brock Rowley, Central Point School District

Shelly Hunt, Klamath Falls School District

Susan Peck, Southern Oregon ESD

Kirk Kolb, Grants Pass School District

Stephanie Allen-Hart, Three Rivers School District

Samuel Bogdanove, Ashland School District

Don Alexander, Prospect School District

Laura Blair, Klamath County School District

April Harrison, Rogue River School District

Suzanne Foster, Phoenix-Talent School District

Heidi Snodgrass, Douglas ESD

Tiffanie Lambert, Eagle Point School District

Gregg Gassman, Southern Oregon University