

Dear Committee members,

I want to express my support of SB 5513.

I have 2 children in public school that receive services for special needs. My children have been in special needs programs for 5 and 8 years each. My children have benefited from receiving early education and special education services in the schools. The specialized teaching and services have allowed them to make gains and be able to integrate into the general education environment as well as work towards their goals to become independent and support themselves later in life. Unfortunately, our family has watched our schools struggle with how to fund and support the services for special education due to increasing numbers of students needing to access special education programs and ongoing budget issues. Over the years, we have seen the special education programs struggle and at times, get reduced.

This year with online and hybrid learning we have seen even bigger challenges. Special education students struggle with online learning, especially in accessing special ed services, due to a lack of needed additional support from school and at home. School support staff try their best but they are spread thin. During social skills classes this school year, both my children, attended the online special education classes and frequently found that they were the only one present. This makes it very hard for them to achieve their goals since social skills learning relies on learning with peers. These kids are experiencing a learning loss, often higher than for their general education peers, under the current situation and ongoing budget issues. We need additional funding for special education and expanded services and staffing. Ideally, this funding should be stable from year to year and accountable by districts to use only for special education.

Please support SB 5513. It is a good start in addressing the needs for special education.

Sincerely,

Connie Clarstrom