

Submitter: Greta West

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Education

Measure: HB2895

Respectfully submitted to the House Committee on Education:

My name is Greta West. I am a public school speech-language pathologist. I serve students with a wide range of disabilities. During my eight years in public education, I have seen the number of students being served on IEP's under the eligibility category of Other Health Impairment or Emotional Behavioral Disability for anxiety dramatically increase.

Additionally, as our understanding and awareness of autism grows, more students are being identified as autistic and made eligible for special education services.

Funding for these services has not kept pace.

It is widely recognized that between 15 and 20% of the world's population is neurodivergent (neurodivergent means people whose brains are wired differently from the majority. It includes conditions such as autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, cognitive differences, and mental health conditions). Many of these individuals need some level of support during their high school years.

My caseload is 60 students, most of whom have complex educational and social pragmatic needs. As our caseload increases, our capacity to authentically and meaningfully serve our students decreases. Our funding means that my school, and most schools in my district, are not appropriately staffed to support our student population. This is leading to significant and widespread burnout. Most special education teachers I know are looking for a way to leave public education because the workload is too high, and it is so difficult to watch our students flail because there are too many of them and not enough of us.

I implore you to support this bill. My students need you.