

Submitter: Yusra Wise
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2953
February 11, 2025

Dear Honorable Legislators,

I am writing this letter in support of increasing the special education funding cap and high cost disability reimbursement so that special education students can receive the support they deserve and need. I write to you as a mother of an autistic child and secondly as an instructional assistant in the special education field.

As I mentioned, my daughter is autistic and attends Riverdale School District. This is her third year as an RSD student and she previously was a student of another area district. We decided to leave the other district due to a few incidents where her safety was compromised. This occurred because of a lack of staffing and therefore inadequate support. In one instance, lack of supervision resulted in her falling off a play structure and sustaining head trauma. Because there were inadequate support staff, no adults were able to watch her, despite this accommodation being written in her IEP. When there was adequate support, my daughter received excellent care and instruction, however, this was not the case on a consistent basis.

When it came time to transition to middle school, our family made the decision to enroll my child at Riverdale. This has been a positive choice for our family. The special education teachers at Riverdale and the support staff go to great lengths to ensure the children on their caseload receive the services detailed on their IEP. With more students being identified as having disabilities, there has been a strain on resources. Without adequate funding, disabled children fall behind on learning goals and social learning opportunities. Special education teachers do not receive adequate funds to attend continuing education seminars to integrate innovative methods and techniques acquired in these training sessions. Without adequate funding, schools cannot hire enough paraeducators to support the special education teachers who are already stretched thin.

Please consider how educating and supporting children with disabilities is a human right where it cannot be a choice to cut corners. I implore you to increase the SPED cap from 11% to 15% as well as the high cost disability reimbursement. The most vulnerable people in our schools need you.

Sincerely,

Yusra Wise

Mother of a disabled child and Special Education employee