

Submitter: JESSICA WADE
On Behalf Of:
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As an occupational therapist with over 20 years experience working in pediatric hospitals as well as in special education, I see the impact of this bill on a regular basis. Just last week, I was at a pediatric kidney center where students who are in end stage renal disease are frequently dropped due to the 10 day rule. Often their families are in deep crisis as they navigate the medical complexities, education is not top of their mind. The student gets dropped as they are going through medical treatment. As they are in treatment and can tolerate education, students often request to have access to their school curriculum only come to find out they have been dropped and don't have access. Furthermore, as things start to improve and students are ready to return to school in some capacity, they often do not re-enroll. If they do it often is very delayed. As a health professional working in education, it is vital to the safety of our students and our work to connect with school teams to ensure proper care is being provided. When students are dropped, it is very difficult for us to access that information. It could be a threatening allergy, seizures, a feeding protocol for safe eating at school, an IEP, etc. When we are without this information it impacts our ability to do our job effectively and to provide the most appropriate education for students. Not to mention, the amount of time we spend in an attempt to track down documents.

Students needs and medical status can change daily. One day a student is in school, the next day they are in the ICU recovering from a car crash. Families should not have to make decisions about their child's education while making life changing decisions about their child. We, as educators working in health care settings are often asking family's to do this as we are up against the clock with the 10 day rule. Imagine going into a family's room while their child is hooked up to tubes and machines after suffering a life threatening illness or injury and asking them what they would like to do about schooling for their child. What they want is for their child to live, they can't imagine school at that moment, nor should they have to.

To switch gears, my other rule is on the feeding and swallowing team where we make feeding protocols to ensure safety eating for students while they are at school. Frequently, students show up at school after not being in school for a little while whether that's medical reasons, family issues, etc only come to find out they had a feeding protocol at their previous school. Sometimes these students will go several months before we are alerted to concerns of safety while eating. This is a big safety concern, one that can have big scary impacts.

Please support this bill to ensure students are safe while at school and health care

professionals and educators can do their job of providing the education a student is entitled to no matter their life or medical circumstance.