



# Parent Advocacy Consortium (PAC)

January 30, 2020

## **HB - 184 Special Education - Judicial Actions - Attorney's Fees and Related Costs**

### **Position: Support**

The Parent Advocacy Consortium is a grassroots organization of parents promoting and protecting the civil rights of our children with disabilities. We strongly encourage the General Assembly to support HB 184.

Children with disabilities are some of the most disadvantaged students in our state, based on achievement gaps, college attendance rates, and decreased lifelong outcomes. Too often our public school systems delay and deny adequate supports for our children with disabilities, as our children languish and waste precious years of their education failing to make the necessary educational progress to open the doors to their futures. HB 184 aims to rectify one aspect of the inequality our children face by ensuring that when a child's educational needs are inadequately served by our trusted public schools, parents have the necessary resources to legally fight and protect their children's rights. Currently this privilege is reserved for the wealthy because expert witness fees are not reimbursed to parents when they prevail and thus parents must have the resources to lose thousands of dollars even when the school is found to be in violation of their children's rights.

There is a fundamental unfairness to a system where parents without economic means are precluded from seeking the expert opinions in court that could ensure their children receive the educational supports to which they are entitled by law. We urge you to right this wrong. Vote favorably on HB 184 to ensure that when parents are forced to take legal action to protect their children's basic rights, and prevail, they are rightfully reimbursed for the costs. No parent wants to be in the position of holding a government agency accountable for fulfilling their legal responsibilities. Far too often this is the role of special needs parents, causing untold financial harm to our most vulnerable citizens. Our children and our families deserve better. Thank you for your support for HB 184.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SRD' or similar, written in a cursive style.

Sarah Ruth Davis, Founder  
3416 Blandford Way  
Davidsonville, Md. 21035  
Cell: (702) 994-7848

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ParentAdvocacyConsortium/>