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HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE  
SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

HB0716/SB0371: Special Education – Individualized Education Programs – Educational Evaluations

Hearing date: February 10<sup>th</sup> and February 11<sup>th</sup>

House Bill 716/Senate Bill 371 will allow families the flexibility of having an independent educational evaluation (IEE) done at the expense of the school system should the school system but unable to provide said evaluation in the time allowed.

The pandemic has brought to light many problems in our public education system, particularly for students with disabilities. The time it takes for an initial assessment or re-evaluation for special education services is just one of these. Currently in Howard County, where I live and send my children to school, they are more than year behind in evaluations. Families that requested evaluations have been waiting for over a year. Of over 930 requests for evaluations from Jan-Dec 2020 only 174 have been completed, that's approximately 18%. 82% of families are still waiting for an evaluation<sup>1</sup>. The US Department of Education has not suspended any part of IDEA due to the pandemic. Federal law has been violated for these families as these assessments should have been completed 90 days after requested. Students are missing months of vital services. Their education, social/emotional development and critical life skills are being adversely affected. These students are falling further and further behind while their families watch helplessly for the school system to get to their student in the queue.

Many private therapy and doctor's offices are open and providing families with the educational assessments their students need to receive services from the school system. However, these assessments can be costly and the school system may decide, after a review meeting, that the assessment doesn't meet the criteria to be accepted by the school system.

By passing this bill, families will be able to request, without costly and timely mediation, an IEE for their child at the expense of the school system should the school system not be able to comply with the federally mandated timeline. It will also give the school system the flexibility to allow families to use private, sanctioned, providers for evaluations to make sure all families have an equitable path toward getting their student the services they need to have the free and appropriate public education they are entitled to.

Please support HB0716/SB0371

<sup>1</sup><https://mpia.hcpss.org/requests/2021-180>