



TO: The Honorable Anne R. Kaiser, Chair
Members, House Ways and Means Committee
The Honorable Michele Guyton

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer

DATE: February 12, 2021

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 727 – *Special Education – Prolonged School Closure – Extension of Education Services*

For more than 60 years, Linwood Center has been providing life-changing programs and services for children and adults living with autism and related developmental disabilities. Linwood currently supports child and adults on the autism spectrum from jurisdictions throughout the State of Maryland. Linwood is one of a handful of programs in the United States and one of only three in the state of Maryland that provides comprehensive education and residential programs throughout the lifespan under one service umbrella. Linwood offers program continuity from childhood into adulthood, developing lifelong relationships with individuals living with autism from elementary school through retirement and old age. Linwood's accredited nonpublic special education program and licensed residential programs provide intensive positive behavioral supports and long-term educational and vocational services to Maryland's autism community. Linwood respectfully offers its **support** for the provisions of House Bill 727.

During this pandemic, Linwood has learned a great deal about the impact of distance learning on the educational success of the students it serves. While distance learning was beneficial to several of their students and they were able to transition quickly, some of their students and families had significant difficulty with remotes services. Further, it has been well recognized that remote services or distance learning does not replace the value of an in-person educational environment. Linwood found that the time they were able to devote to each student in distant learning was not as much as they would have if they were open for in-person learning. Even with a hybrid schedule, there was education time lost.

House Bill 727 recognizes the education time lost that has been experienced due to the pandemic and the negative impact it has had on many special education students, especially those who are aging out of education services. House Bill 727 authorizes the extension of those services for these students. Passage of this legislation will provide a tool to address the loss that has occurred during the pandemic and provide a platform for these students to fully complete their education, an outcome that is especially critical for special education students. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:
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