



The Arc Maryland
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EDUCATION, ENERGY, and the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
SENATE BILL 0296: County Boards of Education - Due Process Proceedings for Children With Disabilities -
Burden of Proof
March 15, 2023
POSITION: SUPPORT

Good afternoon! My name is Anthony Zanfordino, I am presenting on behalf of the Arc Maryland Governmental Affairs committee and my son Stormie Zanfordino (a 16 year old with Down syndrome). I am here to encourage the passage of the bill through committee and eventually the Senate.

Let me start by saying when parents are going into IEP meetings they ask for prayers and guidance. When things get tough, they want an advocate. This is a supposed to be a meeting of on how to best educate our children. Our tax dollars already are paying for this service.

My story. When my son first entered school, we were excited about Infants and Toddlers and eventually Kindergarten. By the time my son entered third grade, we were faced with multiple IEP meetings that wanted take him from an educational track to life skills. I can remember the school providing all this information on his test scores and what he was not doing. As a matter of fact, his third-grade teacher said students like him may not learn. I could have appealed that decision by team, but I already knew he was unwanted at that school. We had to re-enroll him into the other school not just a transfer.

I am ashamed today to say maybe, I should have fought harder for him for his early education. Maybe, I should have filed for due process, but I knew it would be a continual fight to do what is right. It would create financial and emotional stress for my family beyond what we were already going through.

During middle school, we would ask for him to be included in typical classes, but nothing changed. In 2020, we decided to forgo the IEP process and move Stormie to Bishop McNamara HS St. Andreas program. It was a choice for his personal development, education and sense of pride. There are other parents who have decided on homeschooling. In 2022, my wife and I discussed due process with an advocate, but changed our mind when they advised about the uphill battle and no possibility of reimbursement.



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So today, I ask that you approve the bill in committee and bring it to a full Senate vote. It's just one step in us moving closer to working together for the children and the future.