

March, 14 of 2023

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislative Committee Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

My name is Jimara Kocik and I live in Columbia, MD. I am a parent, caregiver and a Board Member of Howard County Autism Society. I am writing to you to ask for your support of the bill Due Process Proceeding for Children With Disabilities Burden of Proof. Bill number SB0926.

I am writing a testimony for you. As a parent with a boy with autism age 9, he has been attending elementary school in Howard County for the last 6 years. Last year, we had a disagreement with the school and my family had to bring an advocate with us during the meetings. It was a very complex and complicated IEP meeting with the school and my husband and I needed the support to navigate it. The Bill is important to us because our family will not be intimidated by the power of school. This bill will aid the balance of power. I have had the opportunity to have an organization like Howard County Autism Society that works with us and helps other families with language barriers. These families do not have the same opportunities for there is no hope for improving better services for their children with special needs. The passing of the bill will not only impact my family, it will impact families with the same issues my family is having. It is important for the Committee to know, especially after covid 19, that public schools students are losing academically and have continued gaps. If we can have a balance of power, we can support them and reverse back that loss. More importantly, the school will follow their IEP more efficiently.

Please consider supporting Bill SB 0926. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Sincerely,

Jimara Kocik

9519 Rommel Drive
Columbia,MD 21046