

February 13, 2023

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to you for help in support of the bill HB469 for Special Education Services and Eligibility. I am mom of twin girls, born June 15, 2005, who both attend The Harbour School in Annapolis. We were told that my girls are entitled to a free and appropriate education, what we did not realize is that it would not be equitable in duration. They will turn 21 on June 15 of 2025, and The Harbour School year starts the first week of July, which means that they turn 21 approximately two weeks before the next school year starts. This two week gap reduces their educational services to 14 years as opposed to 15 years, which most of their peers are eligible to receive. Additionally, my girls would still be graduating at age 21 if they completed their 15th year. The inequity in the special education services in Maryland lies in the fact that not everyone is receiving the same number of years of special education.

Both of my girls have had varied special education paths. One thing I do know is that their high school years, especially their transition services, are proving to be of greatest value. These years are setting them up for life beyond school by teaching them life skills and guiding them thru steps for future employment. They are learning how to be productive citizens as well as being self-reliant within the confounds of their disabilities. Furthermore, we can't ignore the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the education of our students, especially in special education. We all can argue that our children have lost a couple of years of valuable learning. Compound that fact with my girls losing an entire year of education because their birthday falls two weeks before the next school, the inequity of their lost year becomes even greater.

I ask you to please support the bill HB469, not just for my family, but for other special needs children and young adults who would benefit in those crucial transition years in special education. It is alarming that the inequity has not been addressed and the opportunity is here for us all right now.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Ripley
Annapolis, MD