



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

The following is testimony written a member of the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council.

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 797 Education - Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for
Special Education Program and Fund - Established
February 23, 2024
Position: Support

My name is Tiffany Joseph. I am a member of Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council. I am also a mother of children with disabilities, an autistic adult, and a paraeducator that supports other students with disabilities. I also use a communication device to speak.

I support HB 903 because it sets up a program to support to help families navigating special education in Maryland. For people with disabilities, getting access to education that is supportive and appropriate is not easy. Many families of children with disabilities need and want support as they navigate the special education process. But families don't know how to get the support they want. And if they do, they may not be able to afford it.

I think back to when I was a young mom, feeling swallowed by the IEP process while feeling like I was spoken down to the entire time, and given few if any good choices for my family. I wish this was something that I could have had. I am eternally grateful for moving to a new area. The principal, Mr. Kaplan, treated me and my family as an equal member of the education team. Since that change, I have come to learn that the first team wasn't following policy nor law appropriately. But I had no access to any type of help that I could afford and didn't even know where to look.

I'm here today to ensure that those who come behind have better than my family did. Because this process is too daunting without. Especially for those with low income like I had as I am also Disabled.

Children with disabilities have the right to a free, appropriate public education. And they need and want to learn and play together at school. Sometimes it is hard for parents, especially if they are like me and use a communication device, to say that in an IEP meeting with all the school people there. This Program and Fund would help parents like me access the help I need to make sure my child gets the education they need and want to be successful.

That's why I support HB903. Thank you.

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