



Meeting Street

Testimony Re: House Bill (H-7438)

February 27, 2024

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House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

Meeting Street strongly supports passage of House Bill (H-7438), the Early Childhood IDEA Task Force. This bill will help us plan for and create a coherent system and pipeline for educational developmental services for babies and young children with developmental delays and disabilities. The special education system is on the brink of collapse due to severe staffing challenges, a lack of resources, and our inability to screen children early.

Staffing challenges in Early Intervention have resulted in long waitlists for children birth to age 3. This has resulted in children not being screened or receiving services. It has also led to children not being timely transitioned to their local school departments for special education services. School departments are also experiencing staffing challenges, causing them to screen only 36% of eligible children. Children who live in the four core cities are more likely to receive their IDEA services in a self-contained classroom setting (and less likely to receive IDEA services in an inclusive general setting) than children in the remainder of the state. A task force to examine and make the necessary recommendations to create a cohesive and equitable system of services for all of Rhode Island's children and cities and towns so that we, as a State, can ensure that all of our children reach their full potential.

Meeting Street strongly urges your support of House Bill (H-7348). Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

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