

2.19.2014

Dear Assembly Education committee members,

My most sincere gratitude to each one of you for taking the time to hear from advocates for people with disabilities on this important bill for special needs vouchers.

I am sorry I could not testify in person this morning, but please accept this letter and outline as my official support for the bill on special needs vouchers. It is vital that each of you hear the voices of the voiceless through each one of us that presents. It is these voiceless individuals that drives my passion to serve and innovate with scientific research model systems; to improve their lives, abilities and outcomes. The key as I will attempt to outline lies in the methods we employ and support. The methods we have used for some, for far too long, have failed them and their families. In part, this is due to the lack of training of existing staff, and the inability of the current educational system to redesign their models along with current best practice models of brain development. This is the crux of the outline I am providing for each of you.

As an introduction, I am a board certified Music Therapist and a Neurologic Music Therapy Fellow. I recently completed my fellowship through Colorado State University and defended my work and innovative application of the principles of neuroscience this past summer. I have developed a clinical neuroscience model that uses the concept of perceptual priming and cognitive and motor production. At my agency we see dramatic and immediate responses from the most severe and profoundly impaired children and adults. Many of these children are progressing quickly and re-integrating into regular education classrooms back in their own districts. These kinds of results are not and cannot be realized by our current structures within public educational settings. These children need differently structured environments designed specifically to support their individual sensory and perceptual needs.

The progress must begin with this understanding of the diagnosis and its implications on treatment selection and not a blanket approach to all children. This is truly an individualized education and a least restrictive environment.

First, it is vital that we are trained and equipped to provide the best assessment tool to identify the underlying issues facing each child and consequently choose the best clinical intervention, team and environment to address the issues identified by that assessment. Here in lies the key to the accountability measure discussed in last week's hearing.

Second, we must be flexible enough to take the results from the assessment that guides treatment methodology. We must be trained to provide the ongoing evaluation of response to intervention in order to shift and modify intervention to continually meet the quickly changing growth of each child. Understanding the principles of neural habilitation and the sequencing of intervention is vital to realizing these individualized developments.

Finally, we must be skilled enough to translate these neurologic gains and changes to functional skills that enable each child to successfully integrate into continually less restrictive environments. The least restrictive environment must be identified specifically for each child based upon the clinical assessment. The environment must also then be more increasingly naturally supported, outside the academic house. This is a framework for achieving the outcomes that were the source of some concern during last week's hearing.

The basic threefold approach described above, can jump-start the students ability to drastically begin the reduction of supports and ultimately the funding necessary to properly develop each child toward maximum independence. The clinical assessments I have included in my outline are the cornerstones of accountability measures. These can be used to drive intervention and how to identify when to move a child into the next phase of development. Our system will foster a reduction of costs due to increased independence and skill. It is time to unleash the power of the private sector to solve this problem with our current public education system and provide a brighter future for our most vulnerable children.

Again, I want to thank you for receiving my testimony and encourage you to contact me or visit if you have further questions.

I will also be reaching out to each of you in the coming weeks to talk briefly regarding specific details in this plan. I will be in Madison for disabilities advocacy day and the Governors committee for people with disabilities on March 19—20 and hope to meet with many of you on this issue.

Yours in the quest to maximize outcomes for the least of these!

John D. Hartman MT-BC NMT

Neurologic Music Therapy Fellow

P: (414) 614-9992

E: jhartman20@wi.rr.com