

SPECIAL ALERT E-NEWS from LDA of Maine

Call us toll free 1-877-208-4029 for assistance.

LEGISLATURE – Winter 2008

HEARINGS

- Monday, 2/4, 1:00 p.m.
 - LD 2130 – An Act to Implement the Recommendation of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council to Allow Youth to Preregister to Vote upon Reaching 16 Years of Age

WORK SESSIONS

- Wednesday, 2/6, 1:00 p.m.
 - LD 2043 – An Act to Protect Student Athletes
 - LD 2114 – Resolve, Requiring the State to Use Valid Risk and Preventive Factors for Youth Programs
 - LD 2131 – An Act to Implement the Recommendations of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council with Respect to Educational and Organizational Matters
- Thursday, 2/7, 1:00 p.m.
 - LD 1949 – Resolve, Regarding Special Education Evaluations
 - LD 1973 – An Act to Improve the Compliance and Accountability of the Child Development Services
 - LD 2027 – An Act to Provide Parents of Children with Disabilities Access to Ombudsman Services
 - LD 2026 – Resolve, Regarding Legislative Review of Portions of Chapter 101: Maine Unified Special Education Regulation, a Major Substantive Rule of the Department of Education

URGENT HIGH ALERT

Parents we need you help by doing three things (see below)!

Legislative Work Session on Bills Effecting Special Education

1 PM Thursday Feb. 7, 2008/ROOM 202 Cross Office Bld, Augusta

**YOUR LEGISLATOR NEEDS TO HEAR FROM YOU
BEFORE 1 PM Thursday!**

**PLEASE E-MAIL AND OR GIVE THEM A CALL BEFORE TOMORROW NIGHT
(Example below - feel free to cut & paste)**

Thank you to each of you who were able to attend the Public Hearing last week and/or for contacting your legislators on behalf of your children and students with disabilities. The Public Hearing on the special education and CDS bills went well; families were given a respectful hearing and your legislators asked great thoughtful questions.

The Work Session is on Thursday at which time the Committee can act on the bills (approve with a motion "Ought To Pass", disapprove with a motion "Ought Not To Pass", or amend with a motion "Ought To Pass as Amended"). The public can attend, but unlike in public hearing, members of the public can speak only when asked to by the Committee. Please attend if possible because just by being there you are showing your support.

Please contact all 13 members of the Education & Cultural Affairs Committee to **1) thank them for listening to families concerns and 2) request that they act on those concerns** at the work session, plus **3) contact your own local representative and senator asking them to ask their colleagues' to do the same.**

These emails are important for three reasons. **First**, we really did get a thoughtful and respectful hearing, and the committee members deserve our appreciation. **Second**, there is an email campaign by some special education administrators who oppose our position. Therefore the committee members need hear directly from you about these important bills affecting our children and that we need their support. **Third**, ask your own Representative and your own Senator to attend that Work Session on Thursday afternoon and request to be allowed to speak in favor of the families' position on the bills. If they cannot attend in person, ask them to make a personal communication to the Chairs and to the clerk David.Desjardins@legislature.maine.gov asking for their support of the families' position.

Thank you!

NOTE: You don't have to mention the individual special education bills, but they are included in the "Example". You can get the email address of your own rep and senator here:

<http://janus.state.me.us/house/townlist.htm>; additional information check our web www.lidame.org under "Legislative Updates".

Contact info for the 13 Education Committee members:

Sen Peter Bowman peterbowman@comcast.net
Sen Libby Mitchell libmitchell@roadrunner.com
Sen Peter Mills pmills@mainelegal.net
Rep Jackie Norton jrnorton@prexar.com
Rep Ed Finch edfinch@roadrunner.com
Rep Elaine Makas RepElaine.Makas@legislature.maine.gov
Rep David Farrington dwfarrington@maine.rr.com
Rep Charlie Harlow charlow1@maine.rr.com
Rep Pat Sutherland psutherland@sutherlandweston.com
Rep Peter Edgecomb pedgecom@maine.rr.com
Rep Howard McFadden RepHoward.McFadden@legislature.maine.gov
Rep Roberta Muse robertamuse@gmail.com
Rep Meredith Strang Burgess MSBLegislature@burgessadv.com

EXAMPLE E-MAIL LETTER

Senator Elizabeth H. Mitchell
The Maine Senate
3 State House Station
AUGUSTA, ME 04333

Dear Senator Mitchell:

I am a parent of a child with special need and I wish to thank you for listening to our families' concerns at last weeks public hearing and request that you act on these concerns (see below) at your work session on Thursday.

Sincerely,

1. Please oppose unless amended: LD 2136 Legislative Review of Chapter 101 (Major Substantive Regulations for Special Education)

- Please adopt the recommendations in the Final Report (referred to by some as the "Majority Report") dated September 28, 2007 and adopt the definition of adverse effect which the Group reached consensus (16 to 3) or do not require a definition which is not required under Federal law.
- Please clarify that IEP/ISFP minutes (also formerly known as PET minutes) are to be included in the Written Notice (formerly the Prior Written Notice); not eliminated.
- Please do not make any other changes to Chapter 101 especially keeping the 4-year Statute of Limitations for due process hearings.
- Please oppose the use of bright-line test with respect to eligibility, service, and placement to be made by IEP Teams especially for specific learning disabilities (SLD). This is inconsistent with federal law as determined by the U.S. DOE as unnecessary when the eligibility requirements for the SLD category have been satisfied. This is illegal for children with specific learning disabilities.

2. Please oppose: LD 1949: An Act to Change the 60 Calendar Day Timeline for Evaluations Back to 45 School Days

- Please do not change the 60-calendar day timeline for first initial evaluation which aligns with federal regulation and is appropriate for Child Development Services which operates year-round.

3. Please support: LD 1973: An Act to Improve the Compliance and Accountability of the Child Development Services System

- The Subcommittee to Study Early Childhood Special Education's recommended MDOE to report on the Child Development Services sites to assure accountability which we support.