



February 15, 2018

Representative Erin Davis, Chair
House Committee on Children and Seniors
Kansas State Capitol
Room 281-N
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: In support of HB 2745; *Establishing a task force that would draft a transition bill of rights to educate parents and students regarding their rights and resources related to transition services for students receiving special education*

Dear Chair Davis and members of the committee -

My name is Mike Wasmer and I am the parent of a young adult with autism who graduated from the Blue Valley school district last year. I have been advocating for my daughter and for policies to support the autism community of Kansas for almost 20 years. In my professional capacity as director of state government affairs for Autism Speaks since 2011, I have extended that advocacy across the country. In short, I am every IEP team's worst nightmare and no slouch when it comes to advocating for my children.

But I failed my daughter when it came to assuring that she received the transition services that she required — and was entitled to receive — under state and federal law. This was largely because I was never informed about the basics of the transition process, available supports and services, or her rights related to the provision of transition services. I can only ask for what I know exists. As I speak with parents of students with a variety of disabilities across Kansas, my experience is commonplace. Enacting HB 2745 would be a first step in addressing this systemic problem.

“Transition” in the context of special education refers to the ages of 14-24 when a student needs to deliberately prepare for life after high school. The transition process for a student with a disability includes determination of post-secondary goals, development, and implementation of a plan of coordinated services and supports to achieve those goals. IDEA requires that beginning no later than age 16, a student's IEP must include a transition plan. Common transition goals include competitive integrated employment, post-secondary education, and independent living. Access to a robust system of transition services and supports are essential to a positive outcome and may involve coordination of multiple state and federal programs.

Key provisions of HB 2745 include:

- 1) forming a **transition task force** composed of a diverse group of members with expertise in transition;
- 2) development of a **“Transition Bill of Rights”** - an easy to read document for parents and students that explains their rights and provides information and resources related to transition services;
- 3) a requirement to **study** the state of transition services in Kansas, and to **report** on recommendations for programmatic or policy changes.

Regardless of a student's disability or their post-secondary goals, enactment of HB 2745 is a critical step toward improving transition services for some of our most vulnerable citizens. I urge the committee's support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Wasmer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Wasmer
Director, State Government Affairs
Autism Speaks
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