

TESTIMONY
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
2-02-2021
by Heidi Budeau, Special Education Director
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Chairman Weisz and members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Heidi Budeau and I am the Special Education Director for the James River Special Education Cooperative located in central North Dakota. I am providing written testimony on House Bill 1416 with amendments as it is currently written.

The topic of services for students' birth to age 5 is important to all stakeholders- young people, parents, care givers, service providers and the education system. "Catching" our young people as early as possible and providing high quality supports for mental, social and behavioral health along with pre-academic skills instruction can only lead to a better transition into the world of K-12 education.

In order for this to happen, all stakeholders must work in conjunction with each other in an open and collaborative way. The way this bill was presented to education stakeholders, I do not feel this was done. In the Cooperative in which I represent, the Early Childhood Program Coordinator reached out to the local Head Start and Human Service Center- Developmental Disabilities programs and neither were aware of this bill. The first they had heard of it, they stated, was when we brought to their attention. It is highly concerning that the partners in which we want to work more closely and collaboratively do not know this was happening.

I completely support the premise of the bill in that all stakeholders need to work in conjunction to provide the best services to the young people in the state of North Dakota, but from reading through this bill and talking with individuals that work in the Prekindergarten world on a daily basis, I feel there is a lack of understanding of the bill itself and how it will look at the local level. It has been said many times nothing will change, but I find that hard to believe since change will be needed in order to work in a more collaborative manner.

I believe that the following items need to be addressed and would be best addressed through a study committee: the language as stated in Section 3 should not reflect IDEA Part B since that reference's students 6-21, the Early Childhood Council MUST include a Special Education Director and the long-term outcomes for services and collaboration for those working in the field on a daily basis.