



STATE OF DELAWARE
STATE COUNCIL FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
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MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 6, 2010

TO: All Members of the Delaware State Senate
and House of Representatives

FROM: Ms. Daniese McMullin-Powell *DMP/KH*
Chairperson
State Council for Persons with Disabilities

RE: H.B. 350 [Parent-School Compact]

The State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) has reviewed H.B. 350 which is intended to expand the parental involvement portion of schools' Delaware Public Education Profiles, in order to inform the public about which schools are diligently pursuing parent/school compacts, and how schools that receive federal Title 1 funds are using those funds to enhance parental involvement. SCPD has the following observations and recommendation.

First, current law already encourages parental involvement in their children's education within the public school system. See Title 14 Del.C. §157. Unfortunately, the Department of Education (DOE) has not uniformly supported such involvement. A good example is the DOE regulation adopted this month in which the DOE rejected the SCPDs recommendation to include parents in meetings to determine eligibility for school-based intervention services [13 DE Reg. 1301 (April 1, 2010)]. Initiatives to foster a parent-school "partnership" approach to education merit endorsement.

Second, the current statute [§157(d)] requires the DOE to "encourage" public schools to adopt the Parents' Declaration of Responsibilities as local policy. In contrast, the bill mandates that public schools adopt the Declaration or similar document. This may result in more widespread adoption and use of Declarations. Parents would be encouraged, but not required, to sign a Parent/School agreement.

Third, the bill (Section 2) amends the “education profile” statute [Title 14 Del.C. §124A] to require public schools to publish the percentage of parents signing a Parent/School agreement, a description of use of federal funds to promote parental involvement, and their parental involvement policy. This may prompt schools to provide a greater focus on parental involvement and facilitate access to information.

In summary, the State Council for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) endorses the bill subject to one amendment which may strengthen and/or clarify the intent of the bill regarding school involvement and efforts to get parents involved in their child’s education. The concern is with the Declaration and Parent/School Agreement. For example, lines 16-17 focus exclusively on parental duties and facilitating exercise of parental duties, but the language is not as strong in the context of public school duties: “Such Declaration shall identify responsibilities for parents and families, as well as the responsibilities the public schools have to help parents meet such responsibilities.” The sentence could be improved as follows: “Such Declaration shall identify responsibilities of parents and families, as well as the commitment of the public schools to actively collaborate in promoting student success.”

Thank you for your consideration and please contact SCPD if you have any questions regarding our observations or recommendations on the proposed legislation.

cc: The Honorable Jack A. Markell
Mr. Brian Hartman, Esq.
Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
Developmental Disabilities Council

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