

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHJM 4025

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Requesting that Congress modify IDEA to allow parent choice for assessment and treatment.

Sponsors: By Representatives Schindler, Ahern, Cox, Boldt, Mielke, Sump, Pearson, Nixon, Mulliken, Campbell, Benson, Morell, Talcott, Sehlin, Crouse, Buck, Holmquist, Esser, Schmidt, Ericksen, Haigh, Bush, Alexander, Anderson, Hankins, Lisk, Dunshee, Fisher, Mitchell, Woods, Armstrong, Grant, Santos, Hatfield, Wood, O'Brien, McDermott, Upthegrove, Jackley, Lysen, Kagi, Gombosky, Tokuda, Veloria, Kenney, Conway, Cody, Dickerson, Lantz, Fromhold, Berkey, Edwards, Chase, Lovick, Schual-Berke, Murray, Barlean, Jarrett, Cooper, Rockefeller, Simpson, Sullivan, Skinner, Eickmeyer, Ogden, Morris, Linville, Dunn and Darneille.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/4/02, 2/6/02 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/13/02, 96-0.

Passed Senate: 3/2/02, 49-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requests that Congress, during the reauthorization process for the IDEA, modify the wording for "natural environments" so that parents may choose to have their infants and toddlers assessed and treated at neurodevelopmental centers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Tokuda, Chair; Kagi, Vice Chair; Boldt, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Dickerson, Miloscia, Morell, Nixon and Orcutt.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, provides for early intervention services for infants and toddlers ages three and under. Washington receives \$7.2 million in federal funding annually to assist eligible children and their families.

These funds are administered by the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program (ITEIP). The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), is the lead agency for this program, which funds an array of therapies and supports for children with special needs.

The IDEA, as amended in 1997, requires that children receive these services in "natural environments." Natural environments is defined as "settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities."

The Neurodevelopmental Centers of Washington are 14 community, non-profit and hospital-based agencies located across the state that provide speech, occupational and physical therapies and related services to young children with neuromuscular or developmental disorders. At the discretion of the child's primary care provider, referral for additional medical specialty consultation is also available. Other services may include nursing, nutrition, social work, educational services, adaptive equipment, computer augmented communication therapy, hydro therapy, etc. Three Consulting Tertiary Care Centers provide complex medical evaluations and training.

Under the current IDEA provisions, parents are not able to utilize federal funding for assessment and treatment of their children at the neurodevelopmental centers. The IDEA is under consideration for reauthorization by Congress this year.

Summary of Bill:

The memorialists request that Congress, during the reauthorization process for the IDEA, modify the wording for "natural environments" so that parents may choose to have their infants and toddlers assessed and treated at neurodevelopmental centers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Testimony For: The neurodevelopmental centers do great work and have great atmospheres because of the structured and family-oriented environments they provide. Parents should be able to choose to have these covered services provided at these centers. The current federal law clearly has a bias against the neurodevelopmental centers. Please vote this bill out and get Washington state's voice heard in Washington DC.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Schindler, prime sponsor; Skip Dreps, Northwest Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans of America; and Melissa Johnson, Physical Therapy Association of Washington.