



Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council

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House Education Committee

Via email

Dear Representative:

The Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council supports creating a pathway for all students with disabilities to earn a high school diploma and having decisions regarding student promotion for students with disabilities be determined by each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. HB993 and HB1015 by Representative Schroder will create a meaningful and achievable pathway to a diploma for students with disabilities by placing these critical decisions for students in the hands of those people closest to the student.

Currently, Louisiana has among the most stringent requirements to earn a high school diploma and has used high stakes retention policies that disproportionately impact students with disabilities. Unlike most other states, Louisiana promotion and diploma requirements fail to balance the individualized programming needs of students with disabilities with standardized requirements to earn promotion to the next grade level and ultimately exit school with a diploma. As a result, most students with disabilities in Louisiana never earn a diploma. Sadly, students with disabilities drop-out in higher numbers than earn a diploma every year.

Using the IEP team for establishing criteria for student promotion and diploma requirements such as is proposed by HB993 and HB1015 is the approach used by most states across the country. To continue with Louisiana's overly stringent requirements that do not take into consideration the individualized conditions and needs of students with disabilities places unnecessary obstacles in the college and career pathways for students with disabilities. Louisiana students with disabilities are at a disadvantage to students across the nation, not because of instructional practices or outcomes but because of policies. Current Louisiana policies result in unnecessary life-long obstacles for students with disabilities and create an under-employed work force for Louisiana. HB993 and HB1015 provide necessary changes that have long been recognized as appropriate for students with disabilities by the majority of other states.

The Council supports the changes to promotion and diploma decisions determined by an IEP team and we believe it will result in more positive outcomes for students with disabilities and Louisiana.

Sincerely,

Kay Marcel
Chairperson