



SB 2332
House Education
Tuesday, March 16, 2021
Rep. Mark Owens, Chairperson

Chairman Owens and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Roxane Romanick and I'm representing Designer Genes of ND, Inc., as their Executive Director. Designer Genes' membership represents 260 individuals with Down syndrome that either live in our state or are represented by family members in North Dakota. Designer Genes' mission is to strengthen opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome and those who support them to earn, learn, and belong. Outside of our families that choose to homeschool, every child, youth, and young adult (under 22) on our membership list is supported by special education services and have an IEP. The issue of quality special education and general education is highly relevant to our membership.

I am asking for a "do pass" on the engrossed version of SB 2332 and request that "special education" continue to be removed. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/HQT_10-4-06.pdf) requires students on Individual Education Plans (IEP's) to be taught by highly qualified teaching staff. Licensing special education teachers without student teaching and/or clinical field practice does not ensure that teachers will be highly qualified as they begin working with students. Just to name a few of the additional tasks in special education, new teachers will be faced with meeting the obligations of IDEA, writing and implementing IEP's, consulting on accommodations with general education teachers, supervising paraprofessionals, modifying curriculum, attending to the need for positive behavioral strategies as well as behavioral interventions, and ensuring that parental and student rights are upheld.

I fully appreciate the teacher shortages that we are facing in ND, but request that this body consider other solutions, such as financial incentives to enter the field, strategies to retain teachers, and using

Disability Leadership courses in our high schools to encourage students to enter the field of special education. For example, the Peer-to-Peer Leadership elective at Century High School has resulted in 25 students (roughly 50%) pursuing higher education degrees in service to people with disabilities.

Designer Genes believes in setting a high bar for students with Down syndrome and other disabilities receiving education in our public schools. This includes the needed services and supports that is guaranteed to them by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, including highly qualified teachers.

Roxane Romanick
Executive Director
Designer Genes of North Dakota, Inc.
701-391-7421
info@designergenesnd.com