



SB 2351
House Education
Wednesday, March 8, 2023
Representative Pat Heinert, Chair

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Roxane Romanick and I am writing as the representative for Designer Genes of ND, Inc., as their Executive Director. Designer Genes' membership represents 230 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.

Originally, our organization asked for a "do not pass" on SB 2351. This was primarily due to the data collecting methodology stated in the bill in Section 2, Subsection 2, where only two specific categories of disability were mentioned. The two categories listed were "student is developmentally disabled" and "student is intellectually disabled". Since the school-age individuals that Designer Genes supports would fall into these categories, we were concerned that the bill was targeting this specific population and it was unclear what would be the outcome of the data collection. The amended version of SB 2351 has these definitions removed and we are in agreement with this change.

We continue to appreciate the bill sponsors concerns over behavioral incidents in our school and can support a "do pass", however we remain concerned how the information will be used and that we are not alternately collecting data on our schools' positive behavioral support strategies and best practices. We are, instead, using state resources through an attorney general opinion to justify ways schools can legally seclude, restrain, suspend, and expel students. We worry that this work will target students with undesirable behaviors which will eventually lead to increased segregation, decreased inclusion, which equates to a loss in learning opportunities for them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Roxane Romanick
Executive Director
Designer Genes of ND, Inc.

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