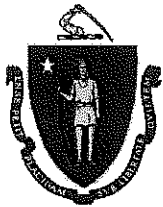


TESTIMONY: S.218



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
 Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

1150 Hancock Street, Third Floor Suite 300
 Quincy, MA 02169-4340

DEVAL L. PATRICK
 GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
 LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JULIE M. FITZPATRICK
 CHAIRPERSON

DANIEL M. SHANNON
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Testimony of Ashley McAnespie
 To the Joint Committee on Education
 June 6, 2013
 RE: Senate Bill 218**

Dear Chairpersons and Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you on Senate Bill 218: An Act to maintain short term objectives for students with disabilities. My name is Ashley McAnespie and I am a Disability Policy Consultant for the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council. The Council is mandated by federal law to identify methods that improve the system of supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. The Council brings together lawmakers and advocates to make sure people with developmental disabilities are included in public policy decisions. The Council works with legislators and policymakers to serve as an impartial educational resource to inform public policy at both state and federal levels to better meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Senate Bill 218 ensures that all children with disabilities have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that has set measureable annual goals, and a description of the student's benchmarks or short term objectives. Senate Bill 218 requires school districts to continue the current practice of including and maintaining short term objectives and benchmarks in the IEPs of all students with disabilities. Short term objectives are an important piece to a child's IEP because they are the guide for educators to use when implementing the long-term annual goals.¹ Continuing the current practice in Massachusetts and utilizing short term objectives is best practice. The inclusion of measurable goals and short term objectives will support successful completion of a student's goals and benchmarks because breaking down a larger goal to a series of short-range objectives can lead to more successful goal attainment and overall improvement in performance.²

Our Council Member, Robert Smith, a father with a son on the Autism Spectrum, was unable to attend today, and asked that I deliver his remarks on his behalf:

"My son has received a wonderful education provided to him by the dedicated professionals of the Watertown Public School system. His IEPs have always included benchmarks and short-term objectives, and I have no

¹ Massachusetts Advocates for Children. (2013) *Benefits of Utilizing Short Term Objectives in Special Education IEP Process* [White Paper].

² Ibid.

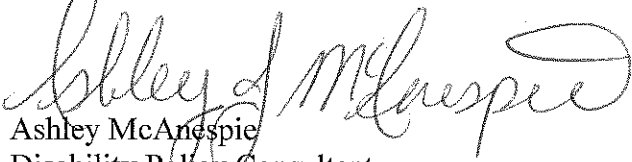


(617) 770-7676 (Voice)
 (617) 770-9499 (TTY)
 (617) 770-1987 (Facsimile)

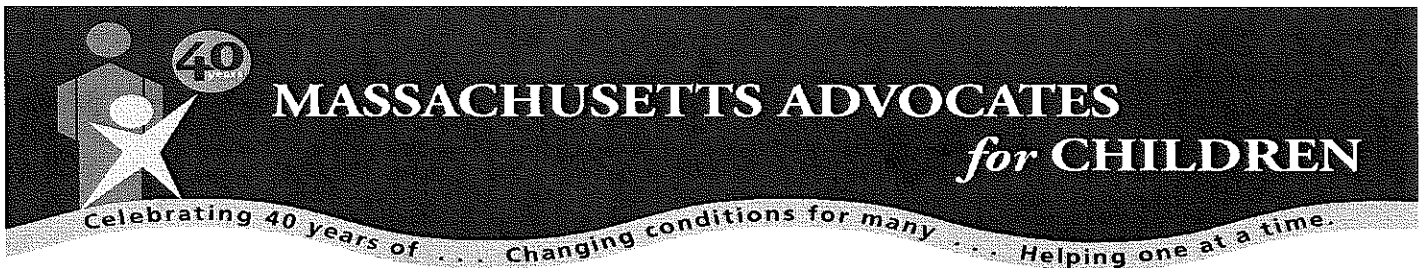
doubt that his progress can be attributed to them. As a nurse, I understand the importance of frequently evaluating a patient's response to treatment so the treatment plan may be modified to achieve the optimum outcome; therefore, I know that benchmarks and short-term objectives are critical to monitor a child's progress and allow him to reach his potential."

In summary, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council supports Senate Bill 218. The Council supports policy initiatives that help people with developmental disabilities lead successful lives in their communities. By requiring that short term objectives and benchmarks be included in all students with disabilities' IEPs, we are supporting the successful accomplishment of the goals for these students. We applaud Senator Creem for sponsoring such an important piece of legislation and thank members of the Joint Committee on Education for your continued support on the behalf of people with developmental disabilities.

Thank You,



Ashley McAespie
Disability Policy Consultant
The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council



MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES for CHILDREN

An Act to Maintain Short Term Objectives for Students with Disabilities S. 218 Lead sponsors: Senator Creem and Representative Benson

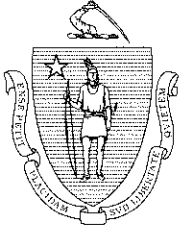
- This bill would require school districts to continue the current practice of including short-term objectives and benchmarks in the IEPs of all students with disabilities. Short-term objectives are based on a child's disability-related needs, assessment data and the collective knowledge of the IEP team.
- A change in federal law removed the statutory requirement and this bill would ensure the *continuation of current practice* by requiring short-term objectives in state law.
- At least 14 states currently require short-term objectives or benchmarks in IEPs, including New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey and Maryland.
- The inclusion of measurable short-term objectives in IEPs is important to assist in measuring the impact of special education services instruction, providing essential information for educators to adjust services and strategies in a timely fashion.
- Short-term objectives, as a system to measure accountability for learning, are especially important given that all students, including students with disabilities must ultimately pass MCAS.
- Measurable goals and short-term objectives are widely accepted and approved practices used in many settings for encouraging progress and attaining important goals, and have also been considered best practice in business for decades.
- The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has agreed to direct school districts to maintain short-term objectives in IEPs at this point in time, but this is such a critical protection for students with disabilities it is important to maintain these rights more permanently in our state law.

There is no cost associated with this bill, as it does not require any change in practice or procedure but rather codifies critical protections currently in place.

Massachusetts Advocates for Children 5-13-13

JUSTICE.





Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MA 02133-1054

JENNIFER E. BENSON
REPRESENTATIVE
37TH MIDDLESEX DISTRICT

Representative Alice Peisch
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 312D
Boston, MA 02133

Committees:
Vice Chair
Health Care Financing

Public Service
Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

ROOM 236, STATE HOUSE
TEL: (617) 722-2430

October 29, 2013

RE: S.218, An Act to maintain short term objectives for students with disabilities

Dear Chairwomen:

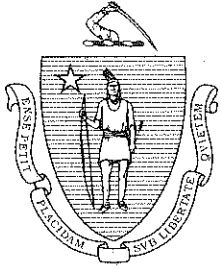
I write to you today in regards to S.218, "An act to maintain short term objectives for students with disabilities." This legislation will require Massachusetts school districts to provide quality education to students with disabilities by maintaining the current practice of measurable goals and short-term objectives.

The current practice in Massachusetts includes short-term objectives and benchmarks in the IEPs of all students with disabilities. S.218 would require school districts across the Commonwealth to continue this practice of short-term objectives as they will help to prepare our students with disabilities for further education, employment and independent living. The inclusion of short-term objectives in IEPs is important in order to assist in measuring the impact of special education services instruction, and to help provide educators with essential information to adjust services and strategies within a reasonable amount of time.

This legislation has no associated cost, it does not require any change in practice or procedure but rather it will codify critical protections currently in place. For these reasons I strongly encourage you to favorably report S.218, "An act to maintain short term objectives for students with disabilities." out of your committee.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Benson
State Representative
37th Middlesex District



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR CYNTHIA STONE CREEM

First Middlesex and Norfolk District

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 312A
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Chair
SENATE POST AUDIT AND OVERSIGHT

CYNTHIA.CREEM@MASENATE.GOV
WWW.MASENATE.GOV

June 11, 2013

Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Senate Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 312D
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Alice Peisch, House Chair
Joint Committee on Education
State House, Room 473G
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senator Chang-Diaz and Representative Peisch:

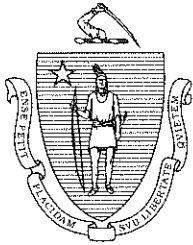
I am writing in support of S.218, *An Act to maintain short term objectives for students with disabilities*. This bill would require school districts to continue the current practice of including and maintaining short term objectives in the individualized education programs (IEP) of special education students. The inclusion of short term objectives was previously mandated under federal law but that requirement has since been removed. This bill would ensure the continuation of short term objectives by making their inclusion mandatory under state law and would ensure that parents and teachers could continue to measure student progress in a meaningful way.

I thank you for time and consideration and urge you to favorably report this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cynthia Stone Creem".

Cynthia Stone Creem
State Senator



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, ROOM 472, BOSTON 02133-1064

JUN 07 REC'D

TOM SANNICANDRO
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
7TH MIDDLESEX DISTRICT
ASHLAND • FRAMINGHAM

7 June 2013

The Honorable Alice H. Peisch
Joint Committee on Education, Chair
State House, Room 473
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Sonia Chang-Diaz
Joint Committee on Education, Chair
State House, Room 312
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairwoman Peisch and Chairwoman Chang-Diaz,

I write today to urge favorable action on S. 205, *An Act relative to assist parental choice in special education placements*; and S. 218, *An Act to maintain short-term objectives for students with disabilities*. These bills will improve the quality of special education by creating accountability measures.

S. 205 requires private special education programs to submit data on student achievement, including the MCAS exam. Currently, this information is not required and parents and schools who wish to enroll their kids in these programs can't determine the quality of the programs. This bill will create transparency in this regard and force special education programs to deliver quality programs with quality outcomes.

S. 218 requires Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to include benchmarks and short-term goals. In the past, IEPs were required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to have these short-term objectives, but a 2004 amendment changed that. Now, short-term objectives are required only for children with disabilities who take alternate assessments, such as the MCAS-alt. However, other special education students do not require to have short-term benchmarks. With the 2004 changes, states decide whether to extend that requirement to all special education students.

Benchmarks help identify interim steps a child can take to reach an annual goal. They also serve as a measuring tool to gauge a student's progress and improve the quality of special education.

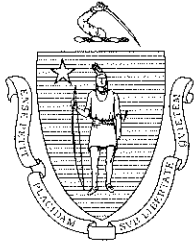
Thank you for your time and consideration of these matters. For more information, please contact me at Tom.Sannicandro@mahouse.gov or 617-722-2013.

Sincerely,

Tom Sannicandro

Chair
Joint Committee on
Higher Education

TEL (617) 722-2013
FAX (617) 722-2239
Tom.Sannicandro@MAhouse.gov



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

MARJORIE C. DECKER
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

25th MIDDLESEX DISTRICT
Cambridge

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 236
TEL. (617) 722-2430

Marjorie.Decker@MAhouse.gov

TO: The Joint Committee on Education

DATE: June 4, 2013

RE: Proposed amendment to the provisions regarding students with disabilities in Chapter 71B of the General Laws

Committees:
Financial Services
Health Care Financing
Housing

I write in support of the proposed amendment to section 3 of Chapter 71B of the General Laws.

I am a co-sponsor of S.218, An Act to Maintain Short Term Objectives for Students with Disabilities, which stipulates that individualized education programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities contain a description of short-term benchmarks and objectives in addition to measurable annual goals. I welcome the Joint Committee on Education's actions on this piece of legislation.

This bill would require Massachusetts school districts to continue to include short-term objectives and benchmarks in IEPs for all students with disabilities. This practice was formerly required under federal law, and it should be maintained under state law.

Creating and tracking short-term goals enhances accountability, helps effectively measure students' improvement, and allows teachers to modify their approach if progress stalls. It is a critical part of tailoring educational services to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Supporting this bill would ensure the continuation of this smart practice in Massachusetts.

Please join me and numerous representatives and senators from across the Commonwealth in supporting this bill.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Representative Marjorie C. Decker
25th Middlesex District