

HB 33 Interested Party Testimony
Andrea Coney
House Finance Subcommittee on Primary & Secondary Education
Chair Tracy Richardson
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Chair Richardson, Ranking Member Isaacsohn, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary & Secondary Education, thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 33, and to share why an increase to the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship (JPSNS) is important for our family. My name is Andrea Coney and I am a parent of a child with a learning disability. This scholarship is crucial for any family, especially a one parent household such as ours. Having a child that needs more help in the classroom than other settings are able to give will leave them far behind their peers. Through the process of getting the proper diagnosis for my child, it's proven that all students don't learn the same. Once I was able to pinpoint the problem with how my child learned, I was able to get on the path of finding a school that would teach to her needs, and not around it. Springer has been an answer to our prayers. Their methods of education has transformed her in reaching those A's and B's. However, the cost of an education to meet my child's needs can sometimes be too much for a family. As a single income household, it's even more challenging.

My daughter Kinzley attended public school for 5 years prior to arriving at Springer School and Center. Her grades suffered and I could not get her previous school to provide her with the help that she needed. There were too many kids in a class and completing her homework at night took hours to finish. She was lost in the crowd with literally no help in sight from her school. We tried private tutoring, different settings for her to do homework, and help from myself and other family members. Nothing seemed to stick. Her grades slipped down to D's and F's. It affected her confidence. As a parent, it was heartbreaking to not be able to fix the problem. I would have multiple meetings with her teachers and the IEP team that seemed only surface level and routine. Her needs were not being met. It seemed genuine concern for her education was not there. My child's educational concerns were nothing but a scheduled meeting on someone's calendar. Once she received her IEP, nothing really changed as far as an effective approach from what was detailed in her plan. She stopped believing in herself. That was the moment I knew she was in the wrong setting.

Finding Springer School and being able to get Kinzley the education that meets her needs has given her a boost in confidence. I have seen her cease with second guessing herself when she's doing homework. Prior to Springer, she would shut completely down, especially when it came to math. Now, she approaches it with belief and confidence. Her view of being challenged has changed for the better. Usually she's able to do her homework on her own, but she understands that asking for help is okay.

The most important thing about the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship is that it provides a great deal of help for my family financially to make sure Kinzley gets access to the educational services she needs to grow and thrive. Without this scholarship, I fear Springer School may be out of reach and she would not get to experience a structured teaching system that has helped rebuild her learning foundation.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on behalf of our family and to share why an increase to the Jon Peterson Special Needs Scholarship is important to us. I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.