



January 22, 2024

Representative Rick Ladd, Chair
House Education Committee

RE: HB 1553-FN – relative to establishing a pilot program under the department of education to offer "spelling to communicate" services to students with autism or apraxia.

Dear Chairman Ladd and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, and I am the Executive Director of the New Hampshire Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD Council). I am providing testimony on behalf of the DD Council membership. Although we are neutral on this Bill, we believe more study and further information is needed related to communication interventions for people with autism and/or apraxia.

At the NHCDD, we are dedicated to the pursuit of dignity and justice, authentic community inclusion, cultural competency, and self-determination for all New Hampshire residents with developmental disabilities. We believe:

- Every individual has the right to communicate in any way they can, and we must support that right however we can.
- Pilot studies can be meaningful ways to establish and support promising or best practices.
- A pilot study could work to increase information and understanding about “spelling to communicate” as a strategy to support certain individuals.
- Interventions and therapies are not a “one-size-fits-all” so we shouldn’t assume that any intervention will work for all students with autism and/or apraxia.
- Any new strategies and resources should be explored with caution to ensure no harm comes to participants.
- Appropriate training is needed for clinicians implementing any therapeutic interventions.
- Individuals and families should determine what is best for themselves when exploring communication strategies and therapeutic interventions.

Our Council, by law, is comprised of at least 60% people with developmental disabilities and parents or guardians of people with developmental disabilities. These members are volunteers advocating for disability justice. We thank our legislators for their service to our community and for taking our testimony into consideration.

Sincerely Yours,

Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, MSW, Executive Director

