

TESTIMONY FOR HB 861, Advisory Committee for Special Education

Good morning, I am Don Schmidt, Asst Supt for Student, Family & Community Services in the Northside ISD, located in the northwest part of San Antonio. I am here on behalf of my Supt. Dr. John Folks, and the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education (TCASE). One of my major responsibilities in Northside is working with our Special Education Department.

The Continuing Advisory Committee for Special Education is a federally required body of 17 members that discuss issues related to services for persons with disabilities and provides information to the governor and others on the issues. The inclusion of a special education director to this committee will bring a unique approach to the governor's advisory committee for special education.

The membership majority of this committee will always be composed of parents, advocates, service providers, and educators. However, it is important that the perspective of a person overseeing a program implementing services for persons with disabilities in public schools share information and provide answers about public school programming.

- An advisory committee is made of members with personal knowledge and experiences to benefit the overall purpose of the committee.
- A director is knowledgeable of the many disabilities that challenge our students.
- A director is knowledgeable of programs and services for our students.
- A director is always looking for ways to increase instruction and close the instructional gaps for our special students.
- It is important for all to have the most complete and accurate information regarding the service requirements and challenges that face our students and public schools.

I appreciate this opportunity to speak on behalf of this bill. Passage of this bill will benefit over 445,000 students with disabilities that are educated in our Texas public schools.

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