

Testimony on Senate Bill 124 and House Bill 1100

2/22/05

Room E1028

My name is Karen Yeaman. I offer written testimony to address the issues contained in Senate Bill 124. My son, Lathom, is a 14 year old who is diagnosed with autism, a severe speech impairment, ADHD, and dyslexia. He is qualified for special education and related services. Until May 2002 Lathom attended school in Dripping Springs ISD and received special education and related services through Hays-Blanco Special Education Cooperative. Lathom's behavior drastically deteriorated and he was engaging in very aggressive behavior both at home and school. My husband and I had to remove him from public school and place him in a private ABA (applied behavior analysis) school for several years. This situation might be avoided for other parents of students with autism/PDD if Senate Bill 124 is passed. Senate Bill 124 is extremely important for students with autism for the following reasons:

1. Early and appropriate intervention for children with autism is the deciding factor in the future the child will have.
2. A committee with at least 50% representation of parents of students with autism/PDD, and professionals who specialize in this disability will have an equal opportunity to effectively address a truly appropriate education plan for these students.
3. Effective research based education interventions such as ABA can be considered.

I request that item (b) (1) "the relevancy of the rule" be removed because the current rule is and remains relevant. I request that the committee replace (b) (2) with a new (b) that states, "In studying the rules the committee shall consider whether the current provisions should be expanded to include other considerations, such as applied behavior analysis,..." In other words, please keep the rule in place and expand the provisions to include other methodologies.

The numbers of children with autism are rising at alarming rates. This bill will give parents of students with autism/PDD and professionals who specialize in this disability an equal opportunity to effectively address a truly appropriate education plan for these students. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today on my child's behalf and other children with autism/PDD.

Sincerely,

Karen Yeaman