

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Debbi Jones
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Kelly Tremlett

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 19 March 2024 7:56 PM
To: Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee
Cc: hello@arighttolearn.com.au
Subject: Submission on the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Attn: Committee Secretary - Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee

Dear Committee Secretary

I write to make a submission on the Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

As a disabled single mother who is currently battling bone marrow cancer, with 3 school aged children with Autism and ADHD diagnoses, I want to share with the Committee my experiences and why I believe that all students with disability deserve access to a fair and equal education.

My 17 year old son was formally suspended 16 times in state primary school for dysregulated emotional outbursts. He is now in his 6th and final year at a private boys school, where he has definitely struggled at times, but never with a need to suspend, just a need for closer supports to help manage emotional regulation, for behaviours similar to those in primary school.

Prior to that, he was required to attend for modified hours in prep and year 1, and then as his complaints of bullying went unaddressed, he became aggressive to his violent bully and lacking the skills to pretend, he was always seen as the aggressor, even over the other child's own admission.

My 15 year old has been steadily unmasking for the past few years, with my support as they were not able to form friendships and they're much happier being openly weird, but their needs are not addressed or met within their state high school.

My 10 year old threatened suicide while trialling ADHD meds, and has since been taken off the stimulant medication, leading to daily meltdowns at school, needing to come home early almost daily, due to the school's inflexibility and inability to help him self regulate.

Finally, an important issue that's given little attention, is the absolute absence of additional supports or protocols for navigating the educational needs of child with disabled parents, especially when the children have neurological conditions which are frequently familial.

Children of these parents often fall through the cracks and miss out on academic and other social and educational activities as they progress through school because often the parents' neurodivergence is not an obstacle for them until the complexity of their lives outstrip their capacity to maintain functional systems, usually right in the middle of their children's educational journey.

These experiences have led me to support the A Right to Learn campaign, which is focused on keeping disabled students in the classroom.

I strongly endorse the campaign's five asks in response to the Bill, including:

1: Using suspension as a last resort. I agree with the Disability Royal Commission recommendation that school suspensions should be a last resort or to prevent 'serious harm'.

2: Currently, the Bill only allows an appeal when a student has been suspended for 11 days or more in a year. I believe that there should be appeal rights for all suspensions, regardless of the number of days.

3: The implementation of a multi-tiered support system. Children experiencing multiple suspensions require support through a multi-tiered system to address their needs effectively.

4: I support the need for increased transparency and accountability in schools regarding efforts to reduce suspensions, such as submitting an annual report to Parliament, establishing a Board to oversee suspensions, and implementing scorecards for schools.

5: To include a Students Rights section in the Bill to enshrine the right to learn for all Queensland students.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to make a submission on the Bill.

Yours sincerely,
Debbi Jones

[REDACTED]

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