

FIX ACT 66

Act 66 gave every student the option of an extra year of education to make up for time lost to COVID-19 ... except those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD), some of whom also have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

They were left out!



THE FIRST PROBLEM

Most students with I/DD were denied the extra year of education because the law does not allow them to stay in school past 21. This makes Act 66 unfair.



This probably includes many students with I/DD, some of whom also have ASD. The law only allowed students with I/DD who turned 21 during the 2020-21 school year to stay in school until they turned 22.

HB2083 as currently proposed.

HB 2083 proposes to extend eligibility for public school to 22 years of age until 2035, covering those as young as 5 years of age when COVID-19 struck.

The problem?
This is very expensive.

Our solution:

Amend HB 2083 to extend eligibility for public school until at least June 2027 to cover those who were youths 16 to 20 years of age when COVID-19 struck.

This amendment would help give the same benefit to youths with and without I/DD. We have spoken with legislators who are very interested in this solution.

For example, all youths were eligible for an extra year of education through Act 66, but only 17% of those with I/DD (e.g., only 21 year olds). Our amendment would increase this to 100% (e.g., adding all 16-20 year olds).

Some argued that special education offers other ways to make up for schooling lost to COVID-19, but there are many barriers.

The result?

Act 66 discriminates against students with I/DD.

Under Act 66, parents of typical youths without I/DD did not have to document COVID-19's impact on their child to have

any chance of receiving extra schooling. They just had to spend 5 minutes filling out a one page form to be guaranteed an extra year.

But parents of youths with I/DD had to spend dozens of hours documenting COVID-19's impact on their children, and then convene multiple meetings with the school team.

And to make a strong enough case to receive even just a couple months of extra schooling, many parents have to incur hundreds of dollars in lawyer's fees.

Our amendments would remove these barriers, so that parents of youths with disabilities would complete the same forms as parents of typical youth had under Act 66.



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THE SECOND PROBLEM

COVID-19 was exceptionally hard on youths with I/DD, especially if their I/DD was more severe. **This makes Act 66 especially unfair.**

They continued to miss hundreds of hours of community-based job training after schools re-opened.

Those with more significant I/DD, who rarely benefit from remote learning, lost 5 months of school when schools first closed.

For some, the break in routines increased problems like aggression and self-injury.

Parents of these youths also had to change their childcare or work schedule for 5 months or more when schools were closed, costing them hundreds or thousands of dollars in expenses or lost wages.



THE THIRD PROBLEM

For youths with I/DD, the transition into adulthood is already very hard. **This makes Act 66 even more unfair.**

The challenges begin as soon as they leave school. Only 8-10% of 20-25 year olds with Autism in Pennsylvania are employed full-time. Those lucky enough to be employed often have low-wage or part-time jobs.

The unemployed face very long waiting lists for the Medicaid waivers needed to pay for day services and programs. And these waivers might not even cover all of the costs, leaving parents with significant out-of-pocket expenses.

This is hard for parents whose lost work opportunities had already cost them tens of thousands of dollars over their child's lifetime.

Even with waivers, day programs and services can be very hard to access in most rural and many suburban regions.



And so too many young adults with I/DD or Autism are stuck at home.

This is documented in national surveys of young adults with Autism, who report that, in the previous 12 months...

(A) **1 in 4 were socially isolated** – they never saw or talked with friends, and were never invited to social activities, and;

(B) **1 in 3 had no community participation** (volunteer / community service activities, lessons / classes, and so on).

More than 50% of parents of 20-25 year olds with Autism in Pennsylvania remain concerned or very concerned about their long-term plans.

Fix Act 66 by amending and then passing HB 2083

Give youth with I/DD the chance they deserve

IT'S ONLY FAIR

Speak to your legislator TODAY!

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