
From: Tracy MacKay [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2017 10:29 AM
To: Office of the Legislative Counsel
Subject: Bill 75

I am writing in response to the introduction of Bill 75. I am a parent of two children, Hannah, 8 years old and Ceilidh who is 11. My children are both strong students who experience many successes at their school and have had some wonderful teachers. They have also faced struggles. One evening Hannah came home from school with a bruise across her cheek, when we asked her what happened she said "Johnny" hit me, but it's okay, he does that, it's not because he's mean. "Johnny" is a little boy who was in her class who often reacted violently and needed a full time educational assistant who was required to wear protective gear including a padded jacket and shin guards. Our biggest concern as parents was not that this had happened, but that it had happened so often that to our daughter who was six years old at the time found it normal and completely acceptable that this had happened and would continue to happen in her classroom.

Unfortunately this is not a situation that is unique to my daughter. I am also a physical education teacher with the Chignecto Central Regional School board. I have two schools in my circuit and we have similar incidents happening everyday. Students who do not have the supports available to them to allow them to be safe at school. Students who do not have the emotional and mental health supports needed to help them cope with the issues they struggle with. Every day I see students who are falling behind academically simply because they do not have the help they need as the teacher's and educational assistants are dealing with behaviour and safety concerns. We need Educational assistants who are able to provide support academically and to support the every growing number of students who are being labelled with a learning disability. We cling to these diagnosis' to help us learn how to better reach students where they are at but with out the supports in place there is little that can actually happen.

The government has pointed out that this bill will allow for a committee to assess and provide support regarding inclusion. There has been an inclusion committee at the Department of Education for several years so forgive us if we have doubts about the effectiveness of a second one. Policy and committees are all well intentioned but we need to see implementation. As a physical education teacher I can look at the Time to Learn document and see that our government recognizes that our students need daily physical education, it is written in there just like daily mathematics and language arts. However, I also know that the reality of it is that many of our students get two half hour blocks at most despite all of the research that points to physical activity as one of the best ways to increase student's academic performance and mental health.

We do not need new legislation. We need a government that is willing to stand by the promises and commitments they have already made. We do not need any new committees, you have the front line workers who already know what we need.

Thank you

Sincerely,
Tracy MacKay