



January 15, 2023

Honorable Members of the Virginia General Assembly
Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia

Regarding: Governor's Budget Item 285(B)

I write to you today on behalf of The Council of Autism Service Providers (CASPs) regarding mandated rate setting for private day special education contained in Item 285 (B) in the Governor's Budget.

CASPs is a non-profit association of organizations committed to providing evidence-based care to individuals with autism. CASPs represents the autism provider community to the nation at large, including government, payers, and the general public. We provide information and education and promote standards that enhance quality of care.

Of particular interest to our member organizations is the provision of a free and appropriate public education for all Virginia students with autism spectrum disorder as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These services must be provided in the least restrictive environment possible for the individual student, with the underlying goal consistently focused on access to the curriculum.

Although some students with autism can participate in special education in their local school, others (approximately 4,000 in Virginia) must do so in private day special education schools due to the severity of their profound disability. IDEA contemplated these differences when clearly providing for different educational environments. The mandate for rate setting is problematic in that its potential implementation does *not* support the ongoing needs of students with profound disabilities who receive their education in these different environments. As an example, staffing ratios and safety protocols required are disregarded in this approach.

Because of this, our request is simple: Please remove language in Item 285 (B) specific to rate setting.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and promote best practices in the provision of special education services to Virginia's autistic students. Your consideration and leadership are appreciated. If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me at jursitti@casproviders.org.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Judith Ursitti'.

Judith Ursitti
Vice President of Government Affairs