

Good (afternoon/evening), My name is Stacey Tie. I am the secretary of Special Education Equity for Kids (SEEK). I would like to thank the committee for providing us the opportunity to give testimony today. I will be addressing our concerns regarding Bill numbers 7076 and 7077.

Proposed bill 7076 presents a significant threat to the rights and educational opportunities of students with disabilities by reducing the maximum age at which they can receive special education services from June 30 of the year they reach 22 to their 22nd birthday. This change would strip away up to a critical year of instruction, transition planning, and support services that are vital for students with disabilities to develop independent living skills, workforce readiness, and social integration. For many of these students, particularly those with significant disabilities, this additional year of services can be the difference between successfully transitioning to adulthood with the necessary support systems in place or being thrust into a world where they are unprepared and unsupported. By accelerating the cutoff for special education eligibility, the bill disregards the individualized needs of students and undermines the fundamental purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which is to ensure that students receive a free and appropriate public education tailored to their unique needs.

Furthermore, this bill disregards the critical role that special education services play in bridging the gap between school and adulthood, particularly for students who require intensive support to transition to post-secondary education, employment, or independent living. By prematurely ending special education services, this legislation would place an undue burden on families, forcing them to navigate complex adult

service systems without adequate preparation. Many state agencies and adult service providers already have long waiting lists, and eliminating an essential year of school-based transition services will only exacerbate these challenges. SEEK strongly opposes this bill, as it prioritizes cost-cutting measures over the well-being of some of our most vulnerable students. We urge legislators to reject this harmful proposal and instead focus on strengthening, rather than diminishing, the supports available to students with disabilities as they prepare for their future.

In regards to bill 7077, while Crisis response drills in schools are intended to prepare students for emergencies, they can be deeply traumatic for children. These drills often simulate high-stress scenarios such as active shooter situations, fires, or natural disasters, exposing young minds to intense fear and anxiety. The sudden alarms, rushed evacuations, and authoritative commands can trigger feelings of helplessness, especially for younger students who may struggle to distinguish drills from real threats. Over time, repeated exposure to these high-adrenaline situations can contribute to heightened stress responses, making school feel like a place of constant vigilance rather than a safe learning environment. Some children may develop lingering fears, nightmares, or avoidance behaviors, associating their classroom with danger rather than security.

Beyond immediate distress, these drills can have long-term psychological effects, particularly for students who have experienced past trauma or have anxiety disorders. The unpredictability of the drills can create a sense of instability, leading to hypervigilance or emotional numbness in children who internalize the threat as ever-present. Instead of instilling confidence, these exercises can exacerbate feelings of

powerlessness, reinforcing the idea that danger is unavoidable rather than manageable. For some, the trauma from these drills can manifest in academic struggles, behavioral issues, or withdrawal from school activities. While preparedness is essential, schools must carefully balance safety training with the mental well-being of students, ensuring that drills are conducted in a way that minimizes psychological harm while still promoting readiness.

Thank you for your time.