

My name is Estella Chapin-Ker. My 11-year-old son is in a Congregated program with the exceptionality of giftedness. He also has had serious Traumatic Brain Injury for which he has spent nearly four years as an out-patient at Holland Bloorview Paediatric brain injury clinic.

I am here tonight to delegate against the current SEAC motion that will have a profound, negative, impact, on every. single. student. in this board. One, of my many, concerns, is that this motion will “Identify groups of students/or schools that WILL be transitioned to the Inclusive model each year, the staff groups that will educate and support them and the training they will need.”

It would be catastrophic to lose our current model of inclusion, which gives students agency, and a VOICE in their educational needs. The proposed model removes student choice, has a bureaucratic body dictate to students with disabilities what their needs are, and silences the voices of the disabled. To borrow from the SEAC motion and the words of Pope Francis we need to have “the courage to give a VOICE to those who are discriminated against due to their disability because sadly, in some countries even today people find it hard to acknowledge them as persons with equal dignity”

We are in our third year of education that has been negatively impacted by pandemic. Students have received an uneven, and inequitable delivery of the curriculum depending on their chosen learning model, family circumstances and numerous other factors. The province has suspended EQAO testing which would have made the needs of struggling students “known”, we have not processed or, even fully completed last year’s OLSAT tests, and to my knowledge, haven’t sorted the logistics for this year’s cohort to be tested.

This motion -which I am happy to elaborate on in detail during questioning - is a multi million dollar initiative which is completely absent of any form of proper due diligence, fiscal and fiduciary responsibility and oversight. It seeks to push students, with serious needs, into the mainstream program which is beyond stressed already.

We have only to look at my birth province of N.B. -(which this motion holds up as the gold standard) that dismantled its ISP programs and the nightmarish chaos that teachers and parents are speaking up against every day.

I am seeking a unanimous vote against this motion and for Trustees to firmly declare as a warning to SEAC and any who might try to silence the voices of of

the disabled, that “As long as I’m serving as a Trustee, special education is protected!”

Kind Regards,
Estelle Chapin-Ker