

For Immediate Release

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**New Parent Empowerment Law Responds to Delay and Deny Findings of ISBE
Public Inquiry into CPS Special Education**

Bill will improve delivery of services for special needs parents, students and teachers

CHICAGO--In a victory for Chicago Public Schools special needs parents, students and teachers, Gov. Rauner this week signed SB 454, a bill that empowers parents to participate as full team members in the special education process for their children and blocks some of the district's most harmful policies uncovered in a five-month state probe of the CPS special ed program

The bill, SB 454, sponsored by Rep. Fred Crespo, of Streamwood, requires CPS to provide parents an advance copy of all the same materials, data and evaluation the school staff will be using to determine services. And, importantly, it bans CPS from imposing "locks and blocks" in the district's internal systems that, until now, prevented teachers and others from implementing services they believe students need.

"This legislation gives CPS parents the timely information they need in order to make sure CPS cannot engage in the systemic, illegal delay and denial of services that has harmed so many of our diverse learners during the last two years," Amy Zimmerman, of Legal Council for Health Justice, explained.

Legal Council worked with Rep. Crespo and other advocate groups to conceive and draft the bill in the wake of an historic Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) investigation that found CPS systematically delayed and denied services to students in violation of federal law. Other proponents of the bill include Access Living, Raise Your Hand, Equip for Equality, and Parents 4 Teachers.

Key provisions of SB 454 (now [Public Act 100-0993](#)) provide transparency about the IEP process. Parents will now be able to walk into a meeting about their child possessing the same information as the school team members. Other protections include:

- Parents must be told 10 days before the IEP meeting what services require data collection and whether or not the school has started collecting any data. ISBE found that CPS was using a lack of data as an excuse for delaying and, in some cases, denying services.
- Five days before the meeting, parents must receive copies of all draft documents including evaluations, data, and proposed student goals.
- If the district fails within 10 days to implement a service that the team deemed necessary for that child, parents must be notified.
- The "locks and blocks" in the district's IEP system that have prevented IEP teams from implementing decisions they believe are necessary are now banned.

- CPS, as well as all other districts in the state, must now notify parents in writing at every IEP meeting that the IEP team must, according to federal law, consider whether the child requires Assistive Technology (AT), such as audio books and speech-to-text software, in order to receive a Free, Appropriate Public Education. The district must also provide parents with contact information for the Illinois' AT program.

The bill took effect August 20, 2018.

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Legal Council for Health Justice uses the power of the law to secure dignity, opportunity, and well-being for people facing barriers due to illness and disability. All programs partner with health and hospital systems to train and support the care provider network, provide direct representation to referred patients, and conduct systemic advocacy to promote health equity among populations facing chronic, disabling, and stigmatizing health and social conditions.
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