

# Meeting Public Comments

**Subcommittee meeting and times are as follows:****HF 2003**

A bill for an act requiring the department of education to develop and administer a pilot program that requires certain specified school districts to establish attendance centers for students requiring special education and students with behavioral issues.

**Subcommittee members:** Fett-CH, Gehlbach, Matson

**Date:** Wednesday, January 28, 2026

**Time:** 4:00 PM - 4:15 PM

**Location:** House Lounge

Names and comments are public records. Remaining information is considered a confidential record.

**Comments Submitted:**[Add Comments](#)**01-28-2026**

Eternity Dunn

Hello, I am a mother to a child with developmental disabilities in the state of Iowa. When we moved to Iowa, we were met by a community that accepted my neurodivergent family. Unfortunately, I cannot say the same for our local school district. During the 20242025 school year, my child was in the 2nd grade at Lincoln Elementary in the Mount Pleasant Community School District. He came to the district with an active IEP which was distributed to the school staff, along with accommodations to help him. The staff at Lincoln Elementary School should have read my sons IEP and implemented it from the beginning of the school year. Yet there are little to no documents regarding services that he must legally receive. Along with the lack of services provided for him, substitute staff at Lincoln Elementary applied 5 physical restraints from December 17th, 2024 until May 22nd, 2025. Each of the restraints were placed regarding behavioral outbursts, due to the neglect and lack of services provided from the school to my son. Each person that restrained my son was not a member of his care team. There were instances where the staff at Lincoln Elementary passed the legal 24 hour parent notification timeline, notifying me of a physical restraint that was applied to my child 26 hours after it happened. There were no debrief meetings after any of the restraints with Lincoln Elementary. Because of the direct neglect towards my child from the staff at Lincoln Elementary School, I was forced to dual enroll him, where he only received public instruction from 8:15am12:15pm. The only response from Lincoln Elementary and the school district as a whole, was to relieve the special education teacher of her duties. I worked with the DRI regarding this issue for over 10 months, leading to nothing being pushed forward due to the already loose laws that Iowa has regarding special education services. I am pleased to report that during the 20252026 school year, we have not had any physical restraints for my child. In our district, schools are split by grade, so he is now in the 3rd, 4th, 5th building. His new IEP and educational team are phenomenal and have worked with my son and I to make sure his needs are clearly outlined, along with his 1:1 adult assistance for his full time at school. I am telling you all of this to show how much help Iowa schools need with children with disabilities and special needs. Segregation and neglect will only further traumatize our most vulnerable children. Under IDEA and FAPE children with disabilities are entitled to a free and appropriate education, similar to their peers. What should be happening is an increase in funding to services provided for social education services in public schools. Appropriate additional funding to public schools to support special education staff and paraprofessionals. Please, dont segregate our children.

**01-28-2026**

Danielle Nordmeyer

This bill is harmful to all students in Iowa. Segregation of kids with extra needs is shameful. It perpetuates the idea of their otherness. It reduces their visibility in society and makes them even more vulnerable. It teaches children without extra needs to be exclusive. Fund public schools. Do not pass this bill.

**01-28-2026**

Erica Leavell

As a career educator and mother of a neurotypical child, I am deeply concerned at the prospect of students getting special education services at any level being removed from the larger student population. My gen ed students benefit from the opportunity to interact with ALL of their peers, and student with special needs would lose the opportunity to engage in the larger school community the pep rallies, the dances, the family nights. My own child has remarked several times on how much she enjoys interacting with a classmate who has Down Syndrome. Why would we take these mutually beneficial interactions away from kids? How is that fair to any of them?

**01-28-2026**

Brandee Borglum

This will be very harmful to the children being targeted in this bill. Separation from peers will only cause more harm. What we need is a reform of how schools see and treat our children.

**01-28-2026**

Amber Hansen

This bill is harmful to all students. Having students with disabilities and increased needs among their peers is beneficial for all students and helps promote inclusivity and understanding. This will also put more financial strain on public education.

**01-28-2026**

Angie Aarhus

Another shameful bill from the Iowa legislature. What are you trying to accomplish with this bill? Do not segregate these students. And you are going to use AEA funds to do it?? No.

**01-28-2026**

Darcy Dugan

This proposal is not a solution. Students and staff need additional support where they are now not to be sent to a completely separate location. Segregation is not an appropriate solution.

**01-28-2026**

Joyce Engelmann

Segregation of special needs students is shameful. It perpetuates a filtered world view. We are all persons worthy of inclusion and we need to learn to work together.

**01-28-2026**

Angie Dudley

This bill would segregate special needs students from the general education population. It is a dangerous assumption that this is acceptable and necessary. All students should be given their right to FAPE and educated in the Least Restricted Environment they are guaranteed. Hiding our special needs children away in a separate segregated school is repeating history. Do not go backwards! We need to support our

rural and urban school districts instead of placing more and more restrictions on them! Do not support this bill.

**01-28-2026**

Kris Williams

As someone who has worked directly with people with disabilities and has close family and friends within this community, I can state unequivocally that HF2003 will cause real harm. This legislation will leave students behind, deliberately limiting their educational opportunities and future potential. Economically, this is a devastatingly shortsighted policy. By segregating students and denying them inclusive education, the state is placing individuals on a path that will require greater public resources for a lifetime, while robbing them of the chance to live independently and contribute fully. There is no societal or fiscal benefit to this approach. Segregating students based on ability is a regressive practice that our society rightly moved away from in the last century. HF2003 is a dangerous step backward. Furthermore, the proposal to strip already underresourced public schools of critical funding is unconscionable. It will hurt every student in the system. The combination of targeting protections for vulnerable students and diverting essential resources echoes some of the darkest chapters in history, where people were marginalized first by race, and then by the false and cruel designation of being "defective" or unworthy of participation in society. I urge you to reject HF2003. Invest in inclusive education and equitable funding for all of Iowa's students.

**01-28-2026**

LuAnn Widen

Bad idea. Bad idea. Bad idea. Going backwards..

**01-28-2026**

Sara Yenser

As a former Iowa resident, I'm deeply concerned that HF 2003 violates fundamental disability rights and decades of educational best practice. This bill's proposed "attendance centers" for special education students directly conflicts with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's requirement for Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that students with disabilities be educated alongside their peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Key problems: Segregating students based on disability status has been proven harmful to both academic outcomes and social development. Coupling "special education" with "behavioral issues" conflates disability with discipline a practice that disproportionately impacts students of color. Separate is not equal this reverses progress toward inclusive education that benefits all students. Additionally, creating separate facilities diverts already limited resources away from proven inclusive support services and classroom accommodations! Research consistently shows inclusive education improves outcomes for both disabled and nondisabled students. HF 2003 is a step backward that will harm Iowa's most vulnerable children. I urge legislators to reject this bill.

**01-28-2026**

Kim Jensen

I have two children with Down Syndrome. Their peers at the school benefit from interacting with my kids as much as my kids benefit from interacting with them. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law ensuring children with disabilities (ages 0-21) receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) tailored to their unique needs. It mandates special education and related services in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Originally passed in 1975, it guarantees rights to individualized instruction, parent participation, and procedural safeguards.

**01-28-2026**

Jennifer Wolff

Please do not let HF 2003 move forward. Iowa in the recent past has been disinvesting in Iowans with disabilities forcing them back into institutions that segregate them and decrease their ability to learn, grow, participate in society and simply have choice. This piece of legislation would continue this trend which is the opposite of the guidelines in other disability civil rights legislation (ADA, 504, and most importantly IDEA). I encourage our legislator to review the attached document.

[Attachment](#)

### **01-28-2026**

Teresa Wellman

A bill calling for a pilot program is ridiculous on its face when there is ample evidence that segregation of students is harmful. This country has spent decades integrating children with various special needs into mainstream classrooms and the results have been overwhelmingly positive. Why on earth would anyone propose such a bill?! This smacks of the eras of institutions and asylums and some other authority deciding who was special. Please dismiss this bill in subcommittee. Vote NO.

### **01-28-2026**

Andrea Jacobs

As a mother, and former childcare worker, I oppose this and any other bill that suggests the segregation of students based on disabilities or learning difficulties. Kids with disabilities deserve to be part of their school community and have friends. Segregating them from the rest of the students will isolate them, make them feel as if they aren't worthy of belonging, and will teach the rest of the students that it is okay to discriminate against those with disabilities.

### **01-28-2026**

Molly Olds

This is a horrible idea, and would be a waste of taxpayer money in multiple ways as we already have data that separation or segregation of special needs has already been done in the past, and it proved to be ineffective. My uncle is blind. My brother is blind. My niece is visually impaired. My uncle is the product of a separate blind school education. He has lived off the government his entire life, now a resident in a nursing home. His social skills were limited; it made it hard for him to maintain relationships with others. My brother was in the same school as I was, had many of the same teachers, got to experience anything he wanted to as any other student in the building, adapted in ways that could assist him. He is now earning a better living than I am, and has a wife and 3 daughters of his own. My niece has attempted to attend a school specifically for the visually impaired, and all of her skills and education tests decreased, and they had to move her back to her original school. She is now almost caught up, and meeting the standards for her grade. We already have documented proof that separating special education does not benefit those with special needs. Furthermore, having special needs students in the classroom helps other children develop empathy and understanding for others. The social and educational benefits to being with a peer group are important and basic life skills. The stigma attached to separation hurt both sides of the equation. Why spend more money to separate students, when it can lead to lack of ability to be independent for many of those with special needs. My uncle who was separated from his siblings has ended up costing the taxpayers more money. This system would not help Iowa, but hurt it.

### **01-27-2026**

Pam Gronau

I do have concerns with this bill as there are many unanswered questions. Our special education students are truly individuals with different individualized needs hence why they have individualized education plans. I truly believe the root of the problem is how schools are interpreting least restrictive environment

as many of these students can not handle being in the general education classroom. However, that doesn't necessarily mean they need to be placed in an entirely different building. We do need alternatives for some students but I think this bill could be going too far. I believe a lot more conversations need to be had before passing this bill.

**01-27-2026**

Heather Staton

This bill seems extremely segregational for students with special needs. Separating special education students is a disservice to all students. Special education students deserve normalcy and deserve to have social interactions with all students. Additionally, most school districts are already struggling with budgets for special education programs. This bill will not only further that struggle, but will also most likely not cover the cost of structuring separate educational centers. My daughter, who is now nineteen, was on an IEP most of her life. She struggled to keep up with other kids academically, but socially she was just like her peers. Separating someone like her from her peers would have been not only socially devastating, but would also have had massive academic repercussions. Kids DO better when they feel accepted and welcome. As a mom with two autistic kids, this bill is a terrifying step toward hiding special needs students away from society... Something we all know is wrong and did away with many years ago. Please do not continue down this path of implying there are children less deserving of education and social interactions with their peers.

**01-27-2026**

Emily Sadewasser

This is harmful to all students and to our schools.

**01-27-2026**

Jenna Anthofer

I have many questions about this bill, but first and foremost I am curious where the money to establish these centers will come from? Our public schools are already underfunded and our teachers overworked and underpaid. If a school has to physically, literally build a new space or addition to accommodate these attendance centers, where will the funds come from?

**01-27-2026**

Allison Gookin

I am in heavy opposition to this bill. The answer to disability is accommodation, not segregation. This bill would take us backwards. It would isolate and other disabled children more than they already are.

**01-27-2026**

Jody Zimple

Stop this craziness everyone is scared you're stealing from the US citizens to fill your own pockets, this is disgusting. These are human beings that you're going to deprive how unfair but I guess I can say I'm not surprised you're stealing everything else. The Mega Republicans have no heart. How do you sleep at night all of you? This is so disgusting.

**01-27-2026**

Jessica Garcia

This is unacceptable funding and training should be going to the public schools that we already have in place and are accessible

**01-27-2026**

Sam Wilson

Vote NO. Why are we not looking for ways to more thoroughly include students and empower teachers with smaller class sizes and more funding.

**01-27-2026**

Sherri Selin

This is an unfair bill please vote against it

**01-27-2026**

Brigitte Mohler

Special education kids should not be separated from their peers to the detriment of their already strapped funding. Do not let this move through. Public schools and special education need more support and funding.

**01-27-2026**

Lori Janke

Members of the Subcommittee, Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on House File 2003. I am deeply concerned that HF 2003 moves Iowa away from the core principles of disability rights, inclusive education, and fiscal responsibility by requiring the creation of separate attendance centers for students with disabilities and students with behavioral needs. Section 1 of HF 2003 allows students to be placed in separate settings if they are deemed unsuccessful in general education even with supplementary aids and services. However, the bill does not require school districts to demonstrate that those supports were actually implemented with fidelity, adequately staffed, properly funded, or delivered as written in a student's IEP. In a system already facing chronic staffing shortages and resource constraints, this creates a dangerous loophole where students may be removed not because supports failed, but because the system failed to provide them. This structure is punitive. It shifts the consequences of systemic shortcomings onto individual students and it does not stop there. By redirecting significant special education support funds into separate programs, HF 2003 reduces staffing, expertise, and supports in general education classrooms, impacting all students who rely on shared services, not just those placed in the pilot centers. Civil rights history has shown us that separate but equal approaches in education do not produce equal outcomes. Disability rights protections were created to prevent isolation, lowered expectations, and exclusion from being normalized under different labels. HF 2003 risks repeating these harms by prioritizing removal over accountability and segregation over support. This bill also matters to the broader community. Operating parallel systems is costly and inefficient. Inclusive education, when properly supported, produces better academic outcomes, higher graduation rates, and stronger workforce readiness. Decisions made under HF 2003 will not only affect individual students and families today, but Iowa's communities and economy tomorrow. Students are not unsuccessful because they require supports. They are unsuccessful when systems fail to provide them. Iowa should not pilot separation when what is needed is investment in staffing, training, mental health supports, and accountability for implementing the services students are already legally entitled to receive. I urge this subcommittee to reconsider HF 2003 and instead pursue solutions that strengthen inclusive education, preserve parent-led decisionmaking through IEP teams, keep education student centered, and ensure accountability before removal is ever considered. Thank you for your time and for considering the longterm impact of this legislation on Iowa's students, families, and communities. Respectfully, Lori A Janke Community member, disabled Iowan, disability rights activist & Davenport School Board Director

**01-27-2026**

Leila Staton

This bill is harmful to each and every student in our school systems. I do not support this bill and hope my representatives vote no.

**01-27-2026**

Hannah Borah

Yet another attempt to fracture an already broken public education system within this state.

**01-27-2026**

Thomas Davis [retired taxpayer. ]

You might want to read the Americans With Disabilities Act to see if this is legal. The last I knew segregation based on disability, or color of skin, was not legal. Furthermore, the separation does not work, never has, never will. We had tried this before. Another good source, Senator Tom Hardin, who led the charge to pass the Americans With Disabilities Act. Leave special education programs alone. Next you will want to segregate schools based on race.

**01-27-2026**

Michael Shane

I vote no.

**01-27-2026**

Jodie Schmidt

This is horrendous and absolutely should not be even in discussions. All children deserve to be served in the same school, segregation is degrading and inhumane. Fund public schools. Fund AEA and special ed services so all students can thrive.

**01-27-2026**

Susan Johnson

Isn't the point of school is to prepare children for the world they live in? How is segregation of children help them function as adults in the real world? Social skills and adaptability are vital skills that will be needed in a variety of jobs. Even if this bill had good intentions, it isn't considering what the children truly need and could have many negative consequences if it passes.

**01-27-2026**

Jill Heeren

As a special education teacher, this is appalling!

**01-27-2026**

Natalie Bousquet

I think this bill is gross on many levels. Segregating kids will not benefit anyone. This is bordering on eugenics.

**01-27-2026**

Jenn Mariman

Hello, my name is Jenn Mariman, I am a mother to two sons, one of whom, suffers from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and is partially wheelchair bound, will eventually be fully bound. As you can assume,

my son utilizes special education and most of all, the AEA. Since the initial cut to the AEA, we personally experienced accessibility issues to provide him with a para during a few lessons. Something that was once easy if needed, is now full of paperwork and hoops to jump through as of we don't already deal with enough. I understand the need for options and different learning environments for those with other special education needs and behavioral challenges, however, I am majorly concerned about the 48% of that cost being taken out of the school to fund this. As the bill reads, it states the "attendance centers" would be available to those who's challenges impede in their success in a regular environment, majority of those with disabilities and special education needs are able to be integrated with their peers and succeed in the environment with the services they were already receiving prior to the AEA cuts. I'm concerned this will cause a couple of issues: 1.) Even more resources are taken from those who are able to stay in the classroom and regular school environment, while still expecting them to meet all the same standards for graduation as other children. Expecting results while removing access to the things that help provide the results is counterintuitive. 2.) If we move 48% of that funding to new 'Attendance Centers' for those with behavioral or special education needs, I am concerned that what we will see happen is that the already stripped down AEA services will all be utilized in these attendance centers, making it so that schools may have more of an incentive to recommend disabled and special needs children to be put into these Attendance Centers because they don't have the resources at the school/in the classroom itself any longer, despite them being able to be stay and work in the traditional classroom setting and be with their peers. As an advocate, and mother of a disabled son, living this daily, it is imperative that, (unless determined that it is not beneficial for the child by the parents/guardians and educators, together) that we keep our childrens with disabilities together with their peers in a regular environment as much as possible, not only is this the beneficial ( in most cases) for our children, but it's important for other children to see and interact with our children, it helps them learn acceptance, understanding, and compassion for those who are different then them. Instead of taking away funding from the services that provide just that, we need to actually be provide them more support. I agree that some children need an option for a different learning environment, I've seen first hand the stress it has on parents knowing their child is not thriving in the regular environments, as well as the stress teachers feel. There are not enough options for those with Autism and Behavior challenges. I think that is necessary to create an area for those that would better thrive in that type of environment, however, I feel there should be some more thought regarding how to fund this. We cannot continue to take away access from one group to try to balance another. They both have their own place and need in our community and should be funded as such.

**01-27-2026**

Roberta Neff

What is wrong with you people those kids that are in special education need to be interacting with normal kids on a regular basis. They do require special attention. I was fortunate to have kids without disabilities, but until youve walked in their shoes, you have no idea.

**01-27-2026**

Grace Rogers

AGAINST. This would be a terrible use of AEA money. That money is already spread thin and you want to take ALMOST HALF of it to segregate students, most of whom, lets face it, have a disability. Speaking of which, youd likely be breaking federal law in more ways that one. DO NOT PASS THIS BILL! It will hurt the children for whom you say you care so desperately.

**01-28-2026**

Jennifer Ballantyne Bartles

No! Absolutely not.

© 2026 Iowa Legislature

[Site Map](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contacts](#)

[Applications](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[ADA Policy](#)

[Online Privacy Policy](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

**Comments?** ⇒ [✉ webmaster@legis.iowa.gov](mailto:webmaster@legis.iowa.gov) | [🗨️ Help Desk: 515-281-6506](#) |

[⚠️ Report ADA Accessibility Issue](#)

*(Please remember that the webmaster does not vote on bills. Direct all comments concerning legislation to State Legislators.)*

---