

# Comment Report

SF 2197

A bill for an act providing for the establishment of a task force related to special education support for students at nonpublic schools. (Formerly SF 168.) Effective date: 07/01/2022.

Subcommittee Members: Salmon-CH, Gjerde, Ingels

Date: 03/07/2022

Time: 05:00 PM

Location: House Lounge

**Name:** Kim Hermesen

**Comment:** Dear Subcommittee Members, I would strongly urge you to support SF 2197 to form a task force to study special education support for students at nonpublic schools. People often think nonpublic schools do not have a significant number of students with special needs and/or are on an IEP but that is not true. Within our archdiocese we have several hundred students who receive services. In some locations the local district utilizes the allowable by state law practice of providing services at the nonpublic site. These situations work very well for consistency of the students and minimizing loss instructional time for the children to be bussed. There are, however, several examples across the state which have been problematic for special education students. These are often in situations where a local public school district refuses to consider all options for placement of special education students. These situations have resulted in significant mediation/court battles which cost taxpayers thousands of dollars and delay appropriate placement/services for children. Please support SF 2197 which would require an in depth study of the issues by creating a task force. This would be good for special education students and help all stakeholders better understand the options currently allowable by law and how to leverage them for the best interest of these students. Thank you! Kim Hermesen

**Name:** Dennis Quint

**Comment:** I urge you to support SF 2197 which would establish a task force to further study how to meet the needs of special education students. Thank you.

**Name:** Peter Smith

**Comment:** As a school administrator I've seen first hand the effects of not having enough assistance for students who need special education support. Having the ability to meet the needs of such students on site would be a huge benefit to students, and to the state of Iowa. I support bill SF 2197 to establish a task force.

**Name:** Sara Kane

**Comment:** I urge you to support the bill SF2197 which would establish a task force regarding special education support for students at nonpublic schools. Thank you!

**Name:** Mary Smock

**Comment:** I strongly encourage you to support SF2197 providing for the establishment of a task force related to special education support for students at nonpublic schools. All parents deserve the right to have their child educated in the environment that they see best for them. Students that qualify for special education have their own challenges. One of these challenges should not be having to transfer schools in order to get their educational needs met. I urge you to consider what is best for the child. Thank you, Mary Smock

**Name:** Kim Grzywacz

**Comment:** I encourage you to support SF 2197. As a public elementary teacher for 18 years I saw first hand the value students with differing abilities bring to a classroom. When we enrolled our youngest in private school for convenience, we stayed because of the curriculum, staff, and the teaching of our faith. Every child should be supported in the school they choose to attend. The growth for all is important.

**Name:** John Flanery

**Comment:** I strongly ask you to vote for this bill as our nonpublic schools service many students on 504 plans, IEP plans and within the realm of special education. This bill will help all students and schools in our state provide the best learning environment as determined by their parents. Parents of students with special needs already have a lot of stress and angst over their situation. Allowing students to attend a school as determined by the parents that receives support from the state will be critical to them. Please support these parents and this bill! Thank you!

**Name:** Sara Rooney

**Comment:** I am the principal at St. Cecilia Catholic School in Ames, and I urge you to establish a task force to examine special education support for students at nonpublic schools. This is my 4th year as principal here, and during that time, the number of students served with an IEP has risen. When our local public school was providing strictly online instruction during the pandemic, many parents of students supported by academic IEPs enrolled their students at St. Cecilia, knowing that an inperson education was better for their child, even if they had to receive remote instruction for their IEP minutes. Several parents of students without IEPs enrolled their students for the benefit of inperson instruction, and their children were later identified to receive special education services. In many ways, nonpublic schools are an ideal environment to work with students who have IEPs, as the smaller class sizes allow for better identification, as well as more individualized accommodations and supports by the general classroom teacher. However, students who receive IEP services in Ames must get on a bus and travel to their neighborhood school to receive specialized instruction. This results in a fragmented school day, loss of minutes of instructional time for the students who need it most, and disruptions to a student's learning when the nonpublic and public schedules do not align. I would be happy to see a task force established that addresses these issues and more, because a student who qualifies for services should receive these services in the least restrictive environment, regardless of whether that environment is in a public or nonpublic school.

**Name:** Jennifer Domeyer

**Comment:** Dear committee members, I am writing today to ask you to support SF 168 and create a task force to support special education support for children at non public schools. Parents should have a choice as to where their children go to school even if the students has special needs. Unfortunately I know several parents who had to make this difficult life changing choice because of funding. They are basically forced to go to public school get their child the support they need. Respectfully, Jennifer Domeyer

**Name:** Amy Jaacks

**Comment:** I strongly encourage you to support SF2197. All parents deserve to do what is best for their child. Students that qualify for special education should not have to face the extra burden of transferring schools to complete their lesson plans.

**Name:** Julie Lohr

**Comment:** As a parent of a disabled child who has sustained emotional trauma from current policies in the Sioux City School District that enforce bussing students from their least restrictive learning environment to a foreign public school, I think a task force

dedicated to learning how Iowa families and disabled children are negatively affected would be incredibly beneficial. We should all be conscious and aware of data. If SCCSD and NW AEA policy is to forcibly remove children against their and their families wills from a building, there should be sound data to support that move. I strongly support this bill.

**Name:** Kim Callahan

**Comment:** Special Education deserves as much support as it can get. Public schools have been doing the work for Special Education students for many years. They have welcomed students with a variety of needs and worked hard to understand the needs and accommodate them. Nonpublic schools that charge tuition make choices about how to spend their money. Historically, those choices have rarely included providing for special education students. Nonpublic schools have been unwilling to dedicate the time, money, and resources to Special Education. Many Catholic schools have regularly rejected admission requests from families with Special Education students. As our state government continues to radically shift public money to private organizations (think Public Education and Medicaid), it's difficult to imagine this bill doesn't have the same eventual objective. Supporting all students regardless of needs is paramount in education. I would ask the state government to stop taking money and resources from public schools for private gain. Which this bill seems like a thinly veiled attempt to do.

**Name:** Donna Bishop

**Comment:** It is my hopes that the plea for support of SF 2197 will not fall short of parents dreams to enroll their children in a school that best meets their families desire. This can only happen if the barriers of their home address and income level is removed from the equation. As we work with persons with intellectual, physical, and emotional disability (and many times a combination of all three) we need to work together to find an answer that has proven to work in some of our districts. We have been extremely fortunate in the Diocese of Des Moines to work with a few of our LEAs that provide special education services for IEP students in our Catholic schools. West Des Moines public has partnered with Sacred Heart and Dowling Catholic for several years, as has St. Patrick in Perry, Iowa. This year Christ the King IEP students are being served with a Des Moines public school teacher onsite as well. We are looking forward to continue with these partnership in the 202223 school year with EL weighted dollars in the vast majority of our LEAs within our 16 Catholic schools. We want to continue these partnerships. These partnerships eliminate the extremely high cost of transportation, wasted instructional time and the stress and anxiety that children experience being bused to a different school. We ask that a task force to be formed to review special education support for students at nonpublic schools. Thank you for keeping the focus on allowing parents to determine what is best for their child/children.

**Name:** Andrea Loutsch

**Comment:** As a principal, I urge you to support the bill SF2197 which would establish a task force regarding special education support for students at nonpublic schools. This bill is a vital component to serving all students in an inclusive education environment and allowing parents to choose the right fit of where their children should attend school. We as a private school and willing and able to serve all students!

**Name:** Jennifer Raes

**Comment:** Please support SF 2197 to form a task force to study special education support for students at nonpublic schools. I strongly believe in our public and nonpublic schools giving access to all. I don't want to tell a family we can't meet their child's needs on many areas connected to IEP's, but we do do that so they go to a public school to access what they will need. We provide services for some IEP's but it is too low. We are in the business of education, and it needs to be for so many more.

