**SSB 3073/HSB713: SLOW DOWN AND DUE DILIGENCE**

I am a **State Special Education Mediator**, on contract with the Iowa DE. I am an independent contractor and have served as mediator for 16 years.

I have worked with over 13 State Department of Education during my career. Other states have special education support delivery services that allow for buying in an out of a service system. **Exactly what is being proposed in this bill.** This does not work. Talk to State Departments with similar demographics. Let me suggest a few: Nebraska, South Dakota, Kansas, Missouri. Choosing to opt in and out of a service delivery option such as choosing an AEA one year and another the next, **DOES NOT WORK.**

I have mediated and co-mediated nearly 200 mediations. These mediations have put me into contact with hundreds of families, teachers, AEA staff, district administrators, principals and students just to name a few of those with whom I have worked. The idea of purchasing services automatically puts specific vulnerable groups in a vulnerable position (low income, rural, diverse). Allotting funds directly to districts has proved to be highly ineffective and chaotic. **It does not work.** Do the work of seeing how this has played out in states with similar demographics and beyond. The AEA structure was designed, in part, because this was not working in Iowa. **The AEA service delivery system does work.**

It is almost certain that if the **SSB 3073/HSB 713** is passed that there will be increased due process hearings and due process hearing requests. Students and families will be negatively impacted when this occurs. It is costly to families and districts and disrupts student lives and education.

Currently and historically, Iowa has one of the lowest numbers of due process hearings in the entire country.

Due process hearings are **very expensive** for districts. The financial impact is greater for smaller and rural districts. The average due process hearing can cost a district **(+ or -) $20,000 – (+ or -) $30,000** depending on the length and complexity of the case. One hearing. It is difficult to budget for this and there is clearly no plan in the Governor’s bill to account for any of these very important details.

If we dismantle the current system and turn it over to the DE our educational system will be in chaos, students with disabilities will suffer.

Deb Thomas

901 25th Street

West Des Moines, Iowa. 50265

 515-306-0114

dthomas145@aol.com