



**DCASE**

District of Columbia  
Association for Special Education

*A rising tide lifts all boats*

**STATEMENT OF GEORGIA VERGOS  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**REGARDING BILL 17-654, “PROTECTION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES  
AMENDMENT ACT OF 2008”**

**June 24, 2008**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Georgia Vergos. I am the vice-president of DCASE, the District of Columbia Association for Special Education. I am submitting this statement in response to the public hearing on Bill 17-654, the “*Protection of Students with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008*”.

The District of Columbia Association for Special Education (DCASE) was recently created in an effort to bring together many of the key constituents involved in providing special education programming and services to District students with disabilities. The majority of the district students attending area nonpublic special education programs are represented by DCASE members. Members of the District of Columbia Association for Special Education have provided special education services to students for many years, and are dedicated to improving educational opportunities for all DC students with disabilities, wherever their needs are best served.

DCASE hopes to be an important partner in the District’s efforts to provide quality special education programming for all eligible students. The energy and enthusiasm directed at improving special education for students is very encouraging; the timing seems perfect for new positive partnerships. With this in mind, we have a few comments on the proposed legislation.

The protections the Council proposes on behalf of our students with this legislation are wonderful, and reflect the sort of ethical practices supported and promoted by our organization. However, we would suggest the legislation should be expanded to include all agencies, schools and institutions that serve DC students. Instead of directing this legislation at nonpublic special education schools, the proposed legislation should be directed at all programs serving District students: public, nonpublic, charter and others.



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DCASE is also concerned about the appeal process relative to the certificates of approval. Essentially, nonpublics can appeal to the SEA, the same agency that would initiate an action against a nonpublic. We strongly feel that any oversight involving control and sanction must include due process for the entity controlled.

The legislation also provides procedures for the Annual Report on nonpublic schools to be presented to the Council and be available to the public on the Internet sites of the SEA and the District of Columbia Public Schools. As there is always a potential for misinformation and errors, we would suggest a period for review of the report by the nonpublic program prior to the posting to ensure the information is accurate.

Thank you so much for considering our comments. The District of Columbia Association for Special Education wishes to be a positive partner in the effort to improve special education. This is, in fact, our mission.