

**Testimony before the District of Columbia Council
Committee on Education
June 19th, 2014**

**Hearing on B20-723 “Special Education Student Rights Act of 2014”, B20-724 “Enhanced
Special Education Services Act of 2014”, and B20-725 “Special Education Quality
Improvement Act of 2014”**

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Good morning. My name is Katrina Johnson and I am a resident of Ward 8 and a mother of a child with special needs at Imagine Southeast Public Charter School. My son Ryan is a lively 4 year old who loves Mickey Mouse, riding his bike, and singing the melodies to songs. When he was 2, I suspected that he had delays. He was evaluated, received an IFSP, and was provided with occupational, speech/language, and cognitive therapy at the National Children's Center. With these services he made significant progress.

When my son turned 3, I enrolled him in Imagine Southeast Charter School. I provided the charter school with his IFSP and asked that he be evaluated for special education services. I requested an evaluation during the enrollment period and on the first day of school, because the school had lost my son's enrollment paperwork. The Special Education Coordinator said she was working on it, but months went by and I didn't hear anything from the school about my son being evaluated. I found out the school had 120 days to complete the evaluation, but it didn't happen in that time.

After the New Year, in January, I contacted Imagine to ask about my son's evaluations and was told that the testing was completed in October. I was never notified or given the results of an evaluation despite asking multiple times, and my son was still not receiving services after 7 months. In February 2014, my son started to receive services.

In addition to taking too long to provide services for my son, Imagine did not provide the results of the evaluation or a draft IEP before the meeting. If I would have received the results of the evaluation at school I could have compared them to his past evaluations at The National Children's Center, which was his old program, and been more proactive and well-prepared for the IEP meeting. I could have known my rights going into the IEP meeting. I asked for feedback

from his therapist at his IEP meeting and I never received any. Documents that I requested were not provided to me until I showed up at an IEP meeting with a lawyer.

I believe that if I had not been such an active parent, my son would still not be receiving services. When my son was at The National Children's Center, he was making significant progress. After the transition and the gap in services he is not making the progress that I know he can at Imagine. A year has been wasted.

My son is really behind because of all of the missed services. He is 4 years old and has the speech ability of a 2 year old. He has trouble expressing himself verbally and gets very frustrated because others cannot understand him. I am trying to find services for him outside of school to make up for the lost time, but it has been very difficult. The school has done a disservice to my son this year, and I am still not confident that my son is receiving all of the services that he is supposed to be receiving.

Shortening the time that schools have to conduct evaluations and requiring schools to provide parents with the documents they need to advocate for their children will help prevent other parents from experiencing what I have been through. Parents need to know that their child's progress in school will not be hindered by long waits for evaluation and services. Parents have a right to receive information that will help them learn about their children's strengths and needs. All children have the right to promptly receive the services they need to make progress in school.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

