

Chairman Jones and Members of the Joint Subcommittee,

Introduction: Thank you for inviting testimony. Thank you to staff who over the summer came to Stafford County to spend time learning about the public day model within our community. I am Donna Krauss, Director of Human Services and Community Engagement for Stafford County. I am here today as a representative of a subset of CSA local government programs that was invited to engage in this process. We are appreciative of the dialogue that occurred. This is a complex, challenging, and dynamic issue to address. The good news is we share a common goal and that is the care, wellbeing, and success of our children is what we are all trying to achieve.

CSA, when done well, works well.

- Using the System of Care approach, community partners collaborate and share resources for the best interest of children and families without the barrier of what agency is responsible for services. The strength of CSA is the ability to work with families and stakeholders to provide continuous discussion and evaluation of the effectiveness of services.
- We acknowledge the issue of the increase in special education placements and costs across the state and support the need to address it. Due to the structure of CSA funded IEP placements, the Family Assessment and Planning Team process has no impact on these services. However, removing educational funds from CSA would unravel the values and mission of CSA and the System of Care that Virginia has built over the last 24 years.
- Going forward to explore possible solutions, we suggest the following:
  - **Best Practices:**
    - Like the Child Welfare Transformation efforts in 2010, look at best practices and uniform processes to develop guidelines/standards for local school divisions when determining out of school placements, ongoing monitoring, and discharge planning.
    - Examining best practices across the state to showcase communities who have been successful in managing SPED placements and costs.
  - **Metrics:** Developing outcome standards for private day placement providers (with providers, VDOE, and local division's involvement) to better track progress of children placed in the private day setting. It would be beneficial that some of these metrics be used as goals in a student's IEP in order to understand what must be accomplished in order for the student to transition back to the local school division.
  - **Funds:**
    - Re-Evaluate use of CSA funds for students with special needs:
      - More flexibility/ less restriction of usage in the public school setting
      - Offer local incentives through grants or startup costs for regional programs
    - Examine use of SPED funds:
      - Inclusion in the local allocation of CSA Pool funds
      - Adapt local match rate to the lower community based services rate

Local governments implementing CSA programs understand there is a place in the system for private day school placements. All localities are experiencing the rise in the numbers of children who have significant mental health needs. These children have a multifaceted and complex number of challenges along with their identified disability. There are times when a local school division will not have the resources to meet the needs of these students. However, localities are invested and interested in collaborating with their local school divisions to bolster their offerings so that as a community we can serve children who otherwise would be candidates for private placements. Currently, this type of strategy is done solely with a localities own resources. It is not until that child is placed outside the community school into a private day placement that CSA state funds are accessible. We feel that serving children within our own communities is the best approach and welcome the opportunity to work on solutions that would enhance that opportunity.

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