

Columba P. Wilson
Senate Hearing Statement

October 30, 2012

My grandson's name is Cristian. He's 8 years old and I've been his legal guardian since he was 2 years old. When he was 2 ½ years old, he was diagnosed with autism, speech impairment and intellectual disability by doctors of psychology and a developmental pediatrician. The Northeast ISD director of psychology and director of special education refused to recognize his autism diagnosis. Their diagnosis was mentally retarded with a low IQ and they said he was incapable of learning. To receive appropriate services for his autism, we had to pay for an advocate, an attorney and finally mediation, before the district agreed he was autistic. That resulted in more problems with Cristian. He was targeted by administration, teachers, and aides. He was being physically hurt at school, and as a result, we had to pick him up early from school 104 times in one year. In 2011 his principal called the police and said he had assaulted a faculty member that we had difficulty with. The assault report against Cristian was full of false statements. He was 6 years old, weighed about 50 pounds, had low muscle tone and was almost non-verbal. Neither the police officer from NEISD nor an administrator contacted me. As of today, Cristian is in his second year at a different school. He speaks in full sentences and his behavior has improved dramatically because of speech and ABA services we provide at home.

Recommendations for the future:

When administrators and other school personnel work with special needs children, they should be trained and know the challenges of teaching. It's a disgrace that they use their positions to press criminal charges. Handcuffing of special needs children and sending them to juvenile and having the police scare them isn't a solution. Our children aren't criminals. Their minds work a different way, and suing the parents is not the solution.

Police should not be called to handle issues related to a student's disability unless it is a serious emergency;

Parents should always be notified before school personnel call the police;

Students shouldn't be interrogated by the police unless a parent is present;

If the school needs to call the police, school personnel should inform the police about a student's disabilities that may impact how the student responds to an officer (i.e. a student is non-verbal); and

If the police are notified, parents should be informed.

Sincerely,



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