

Dear Chair Richardson and Committee Members.

My name is Jessica Merchant and I am a resident of Farmington, MN (District 58).

I am writing to you to request your support for House File 965/Senate File 1210 in support of recovery education for students who have disabilities, like my son William.

Our school attempted to work with my son by offering flexible scheduling of zoom meetings, dropping off supplies, flexible learning activities at home and via zoom. But in the end, none of these things worked very well.

He doesn't/isn't able to participate well during a zoom call, and cannot work independently at all. He needs physical 1:1 assistance with everything, and cognitively has a hard time understanding that there are people on the zoom call. His attention span is also very short (1-2 minutes max), and the environment of a zoom call (often loud and chaotic at times) is distressing and causes him to shut down. There was very little his teachers could do remotely/virtually to connect with him, especially for the first half of distance learning.

In order to make up for what was lost our child needs an extended in-person school year. He is currently signed up for regular ESY services, but it's only a few weeks this summer.

Thank you for your leadership, and please support House File 965/Senate File 1210.

Jessica Merchant