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Parents, Advocates Call on Governor to Support Delay in Special Education Rules

Services for Children with Autism and Other Severe Challenges at Risk

Trenton, New Jersey, June 27, 2017 – Three lines of text in the massive state budget are now a rallying cry for thousands of parents of children with complex, severe disabilities. They are calling on New Jersey Governor Chris Christie to support a budget resolution to delay the implementation of new state rules designed to reduce funding for private special education schools. The rules affect everything, from hiring and training staff, to transportation, school lunch programs and the sale of buildings. Click here for a parent testimonial:

http://www.asah.org/media/Call_to_action.mp4

Through a bi-partisan budget resolution, leaders in New Jersey Legislature have called for a one-year delay in the implementation of these rules.

Earlier this month, the State Board of Education pushed through 82 pages of new fiscal code affecting tuition and services at more than 150 state-approved private special education schools. The schools serve roughly 10,000 children with disabilities so severe and complex that public schools cannot provide them with an appropriate education. The code is slated to take effect on July 1, giving schools only 17 business days to comply.

Scores of parents testified before the State Board of Education in opposition to the code.

“The things that my son needs just medically; the level of nursing care he needs just to be safe, let alone get an education, is well beyond what a public school can do,” said Jennifer Miller Boyle of North Caldwell, whose son Sean attends CTC Academy, a private school in Bergen County.

ASAHI and at least eight other statewide non-profit child advocacy groups – including Autism New Jersey and The Arc of New Jersey – are supporting the budget resolution to delay implementation of the rules for one year in order to give the private special education schools time to make necessary programmatic and fiscal changes.

“We are hopeful that the Governor will continue his legacy of supporting vulnerable children and youth. This is one item in the budget that does not cost any money,” said Gerard Theirs, Executive Director of ASAHI.

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ABOUT ASAHI

ASAHI is a nonprofit statewide association representing 160 private schools for students with disabilities. The schools serve roughly 10,000 students with complex conditions, including those who are medically fragile, on the autism spectrum, exhibit challenging behavior, have a mental illness, and those with multiple disabilities.

ABOUT PRIVATE SPECIAL EDUCATION:

Students at private special education schools are among the most complex—they have autism, medical and feeding issues, mental health challenges, and other multiple disabilities. Their local public school district enrolls them when public school educators have determined that they are unable to provide an appropriate educational program within the local district. Under Federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, (IDEA), students are placed at no cost to families. The local school districts use a combination of state, federal and local funds to pay tuition. When all costs to taxpayers are considered, private special education schools in New Jersey are 20-30% less costly than comparable public programs.

Private special education schools have had decades of positive results. Data show that students with disabilities who graduate from private schools are more likely to have jobs, be engaged in the community, or be enrolled in higher education than students with disabilities who graduate from public schools.

For more information:

- Visit ASAHI.org
- Interview a school director: Call (973) 772-2600 to speak to Dr. William Weiss, Director of North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency.