

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## EHJM 4025

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, February 21, 2002

**Brief Description:** Requesting that Congress modify IDEA to allow parent choice for assessment and treatment.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Schindler, Ahern, Cox, Boldt, Mielke, Sump, Pearson, Nixon, Mulliken, Campbell, Benson, Morell, Talcott, Sehlin, Crouse, Buck, Holmquist, Esser, Schmidt, Ericksen, Haigh, Bush, Alexander, Anderson, Hankins, Lisk, Dunshee, Fisher, Mitchell, Woods, Armstrong, Grant, Santos, Hatfield, Wood, O'Brien, McDermott, Upthegrove, Jackley, Lysen, Kagi, Gombosky, Tokuda, Veloria, Kenney, Conway, Cody, Dickerson, Lantz, Fromhold, Berkey, Edwards, Chase, Lovick, Schual-Berke, Murray, Barlean, Jarrett, Cooper, Rockefeller, Simpson, Sullivan, Skinner, Eickmeyer, Ogden, Morris, Linville, Dunn and Darneille.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/21/02 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Fraser and Winsley.

**Staff:** Rhoda Donkin (786-7198)

**Background:** The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, provides for early intervention services for infants and toddlers ages three and under. Washington receives \$7.2 million in federal funding annually to assist eligible children and their families.

These funds are administered by the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program. The Division of Developmental Disabilities of the Department of Social and Health Services is the lead agency for this program, which funds an array of therapies and supports for children with special needs.

The IDEA, as amended in 1997, requires that children receive these services in "natural environments." Natural environments is defined as "settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities."

The Neurodevelopmental Centers of Washington are 14 community, nonprofit and hospital-based agencies located across the state that provide speech, occupational and physical therapies and related services to young children with neuromuscular or developmental disorders. At the discretion of the child's primary care provider, referral for additional medical specialty consultation is also available. Other services may include nursing,

nutrition, social work, educational services, adaptive equipment, computer augmented communication therapy, hydro- therapy, etc. Three Consulting Tertiary Care Centers provide complex medical evaluations and training.

Under the current IDEA provisions, parents are not able to utilize federal funding for assessment and treatment of their children at the neurodevelopmental centers. The IDEA is under consideration for reauthorization by Congress this year.

**Summary of Bill:** The memorialists request that Congress, during the reauthorization process for the IDEA, modify the wording for "natural environments" so that parents may choose to have their infants and toddlers assessed and treated at neurodevelopmental centers.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Testimony For:** This proclamation will restore parental choice to the IDEA. Let's tell Congress that Washington State supports letting parents choose what "natural environment" is best for their children.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Melissa Johnson, Physical Therapy Association of Washington; Skip Dreps, Northwest Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America.