



New special education rules to bring Michigan in line with federal law unlikely to take effect this year

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LANSING — Changes to Michigan Department of Education rules about how special education students are taught likely won't be taking effect this year after a hearing Thursday morning.

The Joint Committee on Administrative Rules met Thursday morning and was considering changes the MDE believed are needed to bring Michigan in line with federal law.

Lt. Gov. Brian Calley testified Thursday against new special education rules proposed by the Michigan Department of Education.

[File photo](#)

Lt. Gov. Brian Calley testified at the meeting and asked the committee not to approve the rules Thursday. He said parents were not represented well enough at the committee hearing, which typically involves corporate lawyers representing their clients' interests.

"Most parents don't have that ability or that resource," Calley said. "It's just flat-out not accessible."

He added, "It's my preference they not make any rule changes to the special education system until we have a proper venue for families to be heard."

Special education advocates said the rule changes would negatively affect students with disabilities who attend Michigan schools.

Laura Jones, a Dexter resident with a child receiving special education services, started a Change.org petition asking for state superintendent Mike Flanagan to stop the changes. The petition was signed by 10,000 people.

"Public sentiment has clearly been against making the proposed changes. I think the petition demonstrates the level of serious concern that many people have who will be directly affected by these changes," Jones said in a statement.

The rules would "violate the intent and spirit of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," Jones said.

She said parents became aware of the rules changes at the last minute and were confused about what they would mean for their children.

- **Read a summary of the rule changes [here](#).**

Calley said that, in addition to more consideration, the rule changes would muddle Michigan law.

"Their stated intent was to try and line up state and federal rules with education to make them more consistent," Calley said. "In the process of doing that, some things become less clear. There are some things from federal law that, when you match them up with Michigan law, it doesn't look like it's required any more. It looks like it's optional."

Calley added, "Less specificity in Michigan law is not a good thing, it's a bad thing."

A Michigan Department of Education official declined to comment on the hearing.

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