



TEXAS CENTER *for* DISABILITY STUDIES

**Testimony
Senate Education Committee
SB 673 – Zaffirini**

Erin is 16 years old. By senior year, Erin will have been in the district for 13 years, including pre-school. She has grown up with the students in her grade level, some since kindergarten. Imagine the heart-break she would suffer if she had to stand on the sidelines while all her friends prepared for graduation. How could I ever explain to her that she wasn't good enough to go through the ceremony with her friends – that she hadn't achieved enough. Every day is a challenge for Erin. She has to work harder than most kids ever do just to get through a day. She works very hard to deal with the difficulty of the work that seems to come so easy to others, she has to accept that she is different from the others even though the one thing she wants most is to be just like them. She has to fight to not "lose it" because of the overload of sensory input that is inevitable in a school of more than 2,000. She has to think and plan and prepare for the simple things that come naturally to most students. Everyday is hard for Erin, but for 13 years she has gotten up in the morning and faced the challenges. She deserves to be recognized as much as any other student. She deserves to be able to celebrate the accomplishment with the friends she has spent years with. She doesn't deserve to have the door slammed in her face and be told once more that she's not good enough.

Erin and the children like her deserve more from us. There is not a single good reason to deny these children the joy of celebrating graduation with their peers. Just stop for one minute and think what you would want to have happen if it were child. This should be one of the simplest bills you pass this session.

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