



**Testimony to the Senate Education Committee
Regarding SB 35**

March 8, 2011

My name is Jeff Miller. I am a policy specialist for Disability Rights Texas ("DRT"), the designated protection and advocacy system for Texans with disabilities. DRT is a federally funded non-profit organization that advocates for the rights of individuals with disabilities, including students who receive special education services. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.

Transition planning services set the education course for middle and secondary students with disabilities that lead to access of adult services, postsecondary education and the world of work. The idea of transition is simple, but actually carrying out the process can be daunting as it necessitates weaving together the appropriate combination of educational and social services. The legislators who developed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included transition components in the legislation with the goal of preparing students with disabilities to access the supports and services they need to become as independent as possible. Planning in advance is crucial to ensure post school success. Unfortunately, it appears that meaningful planning for transition to post public school life is not happening for many students with disabilities.

Disability Rights Texas supports S.B. 35 and efforts to ensure an effective transition planning and services for students with disabilities transitioning from school to successful post school life, including further education, employment and independent living.

Schools should ensure that parents of students with disabilities are informed about and prepared for Transition issues. Therefore, it is important to require that transition planning begin at age 14 when a student enters high school in order to provide sufficient time to successfully plan transition to life after high school. Waiting to start transition planning until age 16 is too late for many students.

Additionally, school districts should designate a transition specialist with knowledge and experience in transition planning and services. The transition specialist would meet with students and their parents and with adult service agency representatives to help ensure interagency coordination for the student during the transition process. Schools currently have an obligation to provide these services, so this should not require school districts to hire anyone new. Districts would designate a contact person for parents and

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