



OPEN LETTER TO THE PREMIER DOUG FORD, THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION
AND THE MINISTER OF TRAINING, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES

September 6th, 2018

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Lisa Thompson
Minister of Education
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VIA EMAIL: minister.thompson@ontario.ca
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The Honourable Merrilee Fullerton
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**Re: Ontario Human Rights Commission's Recommendations to Improve
Education Outcomes for Students with Disabilities**

Dear Premier and Ministers,

We write to you to endorse the recent recommendations put forward by the Ontario Human Rights Commission to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities (attached).

We are a partnership of organizations dedicated toward creating a fully inclusive education system for all students. As you know, education is vitally important to the social, vocational, and academic development of all persons, including those with disabilities. However, students with disabilities continue to face significant barriers in accessing education.

Throughout our own work we have highlighted a number of these barriers. For instance, our partnership recently published a report on this issue, based on research at Brock and Western University and titled '*If Inclusion Means Everyone, Why Not Me?*'

(attached). This report surveyed the parents of students with intellectual disabilities, who collectively identified a number of significant barriers to receiving meaningful access to education. These barriers included:

- Students with disabilities being routinely denied access to the school and/or classroom;
- Limited access to required accommodations;
- High levels of conflict between educational staff and families, with limited recourse to dispute resolution mechanisms; and
- Limited data on disability-related barriers in the education system.

These are just a small sample of the numerous barriers that prevent students with disabilities from accessing a fulsome and meaningful education. It is for this reason that we urge your government to take up the recent recommendations put forward by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. These recommendations highlight a number of key problems within the current system and outline several concrete steps that your government could take to make the education system more inclusive for all students.

In particular, the OHRC recommends a) bolstering the system of data collection in the education system so that disability-related barriers can be proactively identified, b) implementing more responsive dispute resolution mechanisms for families, c) ending the practice of excluding students with disabilities from school, and d) addressing the persistent delays in the provision of accommodations to students. All of these recommendations target significant barriers that prevent students with disabilities from accessing a quality education, many of which we have highlighted in our report.

In light of your government's commitment to quality education for all students, including those with disabilities, we urge you to implement these recommendations so that students with disabilities will no longer be denied an inclusive education. Ontario is ready for an education system designed for all people.

Yours Truly,

Community Living Ontario
ARCH Disability Law Centre
Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement
Inclusion Research Team Brock University
Canadian Research Centre on Inclusive Education Western University
Inclusive Education Canada

c. Renu Mandhane – Chief Commissioner, Ontario Human Rights Commission
c. Cherie Robertson – Senior Policy Analyst, Ontario Human Rights Commission