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Contact:
Mark Gray
401-206-7044
mgray@ripin.org

Statement from RIPIN, Disability Rights Rhode Island, Parent Support Network of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Developmental Disabilities Council, The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, and The Autism Project on RIDE’s proposed readiness-based graduation requirements

Every student with a disability must be provided an individualized pathway to a high school diploma—the same diploma issued to other high school graduates. Issuing separate diplomas or certificates to students whose disabilities prevent them from completing the requirements—as has been past practice and as these draft regulations continue to allow—devalues the hard work that these students put into pursuing their education, and closes the door to many career, college, and military service opportunities.

During the “Reimagining High School” listening sessions hosted by RIDE in 2021, members of the disability advocacy community—including representatives from many of our organizations—expressed that language ensuring a one-diploma system should be included in any new secondary education regulations. We are disappointed that this was not included and that language in the proposed regulations still allows LEAs to issue sub-standard diplomas or other alternatives to students with IEPs.

**RIDE must support a one-diploma system for all students in Rhode Island and require every district to provide pathways for every student to earn a diploma.**

We cannot allow for the creation of a tiered system of high school graduation, or the issuing of “certificates of attendance” or other sub-standard alternatives, that relegates students to a lower-status graduation based on their disability. As written, the proposed changes to the regulations do not do enough to safeguard against the potential for this type of discrimination.

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