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Letter From The Editor

Courtney Squires

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Courtney Squires

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, it is my honor to present the second issue of Volume XXVII. Our symposium this year tackled a breadth of topics related to the use of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans in youth advocacy. We held this event on Friday, October 27, 2023 at the University of Richmond School of Law. Within this corresponding publication, our authors address special education law and the ways in which special education services intersect with other areas of the law.

The issue begins with a transcription of our symposium, in which speakers and panelists deconstruct the IEP process, highlight the disproportionate representation of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system, and candidly share their experiences navigating the special education space as court-appointed counsel. Following the transcription is our first article, authored by Bailey Ellicott, a third-year student at the University of Richmond School of Law. This article explores the heightened discipline experienced by children with disabilities in schools, and the subsequent ramifications of such disparate treatment. The second article is written by Dr. Patricia Popp, Virginia's state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth and associate professor at the William & Mary School of Education, and Martha Crockett, a doctoral candidate in the K-12 Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership program at William & Mary. This article discusses the educational challenges faced by students with disabilities who are also experiencing homelessness.

The third article, authored by Clifford Clapp, explores how the Fourth Circuit's decision in *Kesha T. Williams v. Stacey A. Kincaid*, et al., may translate to greater protections for transgender students experiencing gender dysphoria through the use of 504 plans. For the fourth article of this issue, third-year Richmond law student, Madison Neale, explores the ramifications of "self-contained classrooms," focusing especially on how children segregated into these classrooms often experience later involvement with the criminal legal system. Following Madison Neale's article is an article from Cassie Powell, a former legal aid attorney and incoming director of the Access to Justice Clinic at the University of Richmond School of Law. Ms. Powell's article examines the current legal landscape regarding the appointment of surrogate parents for children in foster care who receive

special education services. This symposium issue concludes with a foundational piece authored by five panelists from the symposium event: attorneys Hank Bostwick and Melissa Waugh, and special education advocates Sara Platenburg, Courtney Pugh and LaTonya Slade. This article outlines the history of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the fundamental elements of the IEP, and offers practical guidance for attorneys and advocates working in the special education space.

Thank you, endlessly, to Symposium Editors Nicole Evans and Erin Sweet, for the countless weeks they spent planning the symposium event, the eventual execution of the symposium event, and all the work they put into publishing this issue. I would also like to acknowledge the *Richmond Public Interest Law Review* staff for the diligent efforts they contributed to this issue's publication. On behalf of the *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, I hope this issue inspires advocates, practitioners, judges, and more to support school-aged youth throughout the Commonwealth and beyond.

Sincerely,

Courtney Squires
Editor-in-Chief