

TURNING POLICY ADVOCACY INTO LASTING CHANGE FOR DC KIDS

On any given day you will find our lawyers, social workers and investigators meeting with teachers at a local school, coloring with children in their homes or talking with concerned parents in a doctor's office. Through listening to what DC children and families are saying—and advocating for them in courtrooms, classrooms and with government agencies—we have a deep understanding of the challenges they face. Our policy and communications team is dedicated to finding systemic fixes to these challenges.

FAIR ACCESS TO SCHOOL



At Children's Law Center, we advocate for kids who are disproportionately impacted by school suspensions and expulsions every day: children of color, children with disabilities and children in foster care. For more than 20 years, we have

served kids who are sent home from school—often for minor offenses like falling asleep in class—instead of receiving the support they need to stay in the classroom and continue learning. We know that students who aren't in school miss critical learning time and are more likely to fall behind, get poor grades and drop out.

In 2018 we continued our fight to reduce bias in school discipline by campaigning for passage of the Student Fair Access to School Act. Today, the law is in effect and change is happening in DC schools. This groundbreaking legislation will keep thousands of DC students in school, learning. Now, we're focusing on the bill's successful implementation.

SPECIAL EDUCATION VICTORY

For years, CLC campaigned to reform DC's special education system. As a result, in 2014, the DC Council unanimously passed a package of bills that resulted in significant changes. However, three critical improvements remained unfunded and unimplemented, so our team kept advocating.

We're proud to share that as of 2018, after our multi-year campaign, the final special education reforms are funded!

The first reform ensures that children can begin school ready to learn. In the past, infants and toddlers had to show major or multiple delays in a developmental area, like walking or talking, to qualify for services that address these delays. The result was that kids with less severe developmental delays were beginning school already behind their peers, contributing to poor academic performance. Now, these children will receive help early, giving them the tools they need to succeed.



The CLC team celebrates the Student Fair Access to School Act victory after months of work with the DC Council, coalition allies, healthcare partners and educators.

The second reform focuses on evaluations to determine a child's learning needs. Children now have the right to these evaluations within 60 days—half of the previous 120-day wait. The third reform enables schools to begin preparing teenagers with special needs for adulthood at age 14, as opposed to 16. This critical change gives students and their families more time, skills and support to plan for the future.

We are thrilled to see these reforms funded and will continue fighting to ensure all DC children are offered a quality education.