**Using the Special Education Whitepaper with Legislators & State Leaders**

The 2024 Tennessee Disability Coalition whitepaper on the state of behavior supports for students with disabilities provides an analysis of statewide problems and possible policy solutions.

Sharing you or your family’s experience with a legislator or state leader is a powerful way to advocate for change.

You can use this whitepaper to go along with your experience as a source of statewide data and to provide background information. You can also use the policy solutions in this whitepaper as suggestions for what our legislators and state leaders can do to make special education and support for students with disabilities better.

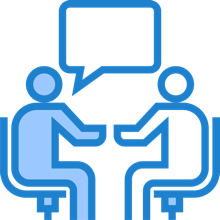
**Here’s an example:**

If your personal experience or what you care about the most is that students don’t get enough time with behavior support.



**You can cite the data from the whitepaper:**

* A study of teacher shortages in Tennessee found that during the 2019-2020 school year, 85% of school districts in the state said that they had a shortage of special education teachers and had too few high-quality applicants to fill their vacant special education positions.
* According to the Council for Exceptional Children’s 2019 State of the Special Education Profession Survey Report, 79% of special education teachers reported that they had insufficient or no time to plan lessons, 86% said they had no or insufficient time to plan with partners (like related services professionals, paraprofessionals, etc.) and 89% said they had no or insufficient time to plan with IEP team members (like general education teachers, administrators, family members, etc.).



**Share your story about what this has meant in your life, your student’s life or for their school.**

Then, you can ask your legislator or state leader to take action. You could say:



**Working together, we can make behavior supports for students with disabilities a lot better by:**

1. **Recruiting new practitioners.** The state could establish student loan forgiveness, state-issued scholarships, career and technical education (CTE) programming and grow-your-own occupational pipelines.
2. **Setting maximum caseloads** so that practitioners have enough time to support each individual student.
3. **Direct the TN Department of Education to train support staff in data collection** so thatspecial education teachers will have more time to provide individualized instruction and implement behavior interventions.