

**SENATE EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
SENATE BILL 705  
EDUCATION—PHYSICAL RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION—LIMITATIONS, REPORTING,  
AND TRAINING**

**MARCH 2, 2022  
POSITION: SUPPORT**

**Howard County Autism Society  
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The Howard County Autism Society is pleased to offer this written testimony in support of SB705, which would ban the use of seclusion in public schools across Maryland, and provide additional protections and monitoring of the use of physical restraints. In addition to eliminating seclusion in public schools, the act would bar public schools from using restraint as part of a behavioral intervention plan, and thus limit it to a last resort in emergency situations.

The Howard County Autism Society is especially concerned about this issue based on our experience with restraining and seclusion in Howard County.

As highlighted in a recent Howard County Board of Education board report, 91 percent of restraints or seclusions occur with individuals with IEPs and roughly one in four of these individuals have a primary educational disability of autism. African-American students are disproportionately subjected in Howard County and numerous other counties statewide. The parents and self-advocates involved in the Howard County Autism Society view restraint and seclusion as an anachronistic policy that is traumatic to students, parents and educators. While many autistic students benefit from calm, quiet spaces, they should be free to enter and leave them, not locked in at the discretion of adults. Each time restraint and seclusion is used it represents a time when the schools plan to educate a child has not succeeded.

The law proposed today builds on a movement growing across our state. An increasing number of districts and health care providers are eliminating seclusion and putting restrictions on the use of restraint, addressing the underlying causes of conflicts and finding alternatives to keep staff safe. As of last year, Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester did not report using seclusion. Frederick County will stop secluding as a condition of its settlement with the US Department of Justice. Howard County voted to eliminate the use of restraint in the next school year, and is piloting an alternative conflict resolution system that could soon go District wide.

Eliminating seclusion altogether and eradicating restraint as an option for positive behavioral intervention will actually protect staff and students. When de-escalation strategies and trauma informed approaches are used, students are able to manage their behaviors without being triggered into violent acts. For example, Ukeru is a physical alternative to restraining which has been demonstrated to reduce injuries and was part of a dramatic reduction of restraints in Calvert County and in health and education settings across the nation.

It's time for the state to be clear to its schools and the disabled community that they are looking forward not backward. It's time to eliminate seclusion and find alternatives to restraint in our schools.