

Laura Jeannel

902D Blue Leaf Court

Frederick, MD 21701

Re: HB1166: Restraint and Seclusion

Date February 22, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Laura Jeannel, and I am the parent of a 9-year-old who has moderate/severe autism. We live in Frederick, MD in Frederick County.

In Jan 2020, my son was repeatedly restrained in two-person transport and 1 significant incident where he was placed in seclusion. My son is low verbal but can make simple requests for his needs. My son was repeatedly asking for water. In his elementary school of a substantially separate classroom for children with moderate/severe disabilities – the teacher was often outside of the classroom. As a result – the paraprofessional kept routinely giving my son water based on every request and gave him a gallon of water. My son is not continent and ended up urinating his pants resulting in crying. His crying escalated and he was then placed and carried by two people into a seclusion room where he was kept over and over for a duration of up to an hour. He was taken to the hospital the next day in which he had been completely and medically dehydrated having been forced to drink so much water and was leading to an intestinal occlusion which could have resulted in death.

The anxiety of being in the seclusion room (Deer Crossing Elementary School – Challenges Program) had happened not only to my son but several children with varying disabilities. The central office investigated and placed the classroom under investigation reviewing several important cases – including ours. While we negotiated to change classrooms and elementary schools given our lack of confidence in this classroom, our family decided to homeschool long-term based on this severe incident and an incident prior in another state.

Our live-in nurse observed the school berating the special needs children, being abrupt, calling them ‘zoo animals’, throwing chairs and the children were whimpering while my own son was in a traumatized state eating the buttons off his own shirt as he was afraid to be in the classroom.

In MD – there are few medical professionals who will support non-verbal/low-verbal children based on physical and emotional trauma in which our children are subjected to physical and emotional abuse. My son lost 80% of his speaking ability, increased stimming, and ‘scripting’ (i.e., repeating) which took nearly 1 year to heal. In addition – medical issues appeared such as severe nightmares, grinding his teeth to the point of breaking his teeth and now TMJ causing nerve pain on top of his disability which is difficult to manage.

Two out of three elementary schools in Frederick are under repeat investigation for the physical, emotional, and mental abuse of moderate/severely challenged disabled children. Nothing has been done. The professionals including teachers and paraprofessionals continue to abuse the children and/or simply moved to another school for the incidences to occur again and again. In Frederick – there is a large population that now homeschools their children as schools are no longer a safe place for special needs children to be educated. Many parents have lost significant sums to attorneys in which Frederick refuses non-public schools to children who have severely regressed due to regression and now needing more significant supports. Over 3000 people in Frederick homeschool for varying reasons and a significant amount of special needs families as the schools are unfit and unsafe.

Frederick County has the highest number of cases of restraint and seclusion based on the population and in which these numbers that are not routinely reported out of all of Maryland.

**In view of my child's significant regression and trauma and the numerous children who have been physically and traumatically harmed by Frederick County Public School system, , I am in strong support of HB1166 for implementing jurisdiction regarding Restraint and Seclusion.**

Kind Regards,

Laura Jeannel (mother to a 9 yr old with moderate/severe autism)

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