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February 22, 2021

Dear House Ways and Means Committee Members-

My name is Mita Vogel and I am writing you to express my support of HB1166 and in particular the aspects of the Bill that support training for staff in understanding the impact of trauma on behavior for kids and families that they work with daily.

I am a licensed social worker who has worked in the field of child welfare for over 20 years. My experience includes public child welfare, schools, substance abuse treatment (both in patient and out patient), school assessments, forensics, teaching graduate students and training other professionals. I am well versed in the development, use and evaluation of programs and practices that impact both staff and clients. To that end, I want to express my support for HB 1166.

Seclusion and restraint (S/R) is never a "good" experience for anyone- staff or person being re-strained or secluded. I have found this is especially true for children and the adults who work with them both through my own professional experience of being involved in seclusion and restraint of children and also seeing how it impacts staff who are involved with a S/R incident. Simply, there is almost always a better way. Given that, why is S/R done? Invariably because staff were responding to a situation with a limited skill set and/or limited choices as to what other options could be. Also, there is often a lack of understanding of the individual circumstances that exist with a client so there is not an appreciation of the need to use different techniques to work with that individual. HB1166 will look to change this.

Simply, if passed, HB1166 will require that school staff be informed, via professional training, of the circumstances around and impact of trauma on how children move around in their worlds. By incorporating this information and understanding into the interactions that staff have with students, there will be a change in how S/R is seen and a better appreciation of the negative impact that S/R has on students and most importantly, how student behaviors can be addressed and worked through in ways that are better for the student, the staff and the school building as a whole. Kids who feel safe in school feel safer in their homes, and feel safer in their communities. Safe kids, safe families, safe communities- it becomes a win for all involved. I would also stress, that S/R is incredibly traumatic for staff and increasing knowledge about it and its link to trauma as well as providing for support for staff involved with behaviorally challenging kids will make the school house a better place for all involved.

Thank you for reading my opinion on this Bill and I encourage you to pass the Bill.

Sincerely,

Carmita (Mita) Vogel