

Good Afternoon Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Selicia Brown and I am the parent of Caleb Brown who has been diagnosed with Autism. Caleb is unable to express to me what happened at school throughout the day. When I ask Caleb, "How was school?" his response is always, "school was good." I rely heavily on the information that is given to me from the adults in his classroom.

Caleb's incident occurred on May 28, 2019. Caleb was in his classroom and wanted his aides attention to help him with a task. The aide told him that he had to wait. Caleb did not understand that he needed to wait until the aide was finished what she was doing. He only knew that what he wanted was not being given to him. He began to have a tantrum pulling on the aides shirt. The aide then told Caleb to get off of her or she was going to crack his knuckles. When Caleb did not remove his hands from her shirt she then cracked his knuckles. Caleb's teacher removed him from the classroom, took him to the nurse and went to the principal to report the incident.

I spoke to Caleb's teacher on June 7th at noon. She advised that she and other adults in the room heard the aide say she was going to crack Caleb's knuckles and then she and other adults heard Caleb's knuckles crack. His teacher said that when she heard his knuckles crack she immediately removed Caleb from the room, took him to the nurse to make sure he was ok and reported the incident to the principal. She said that the aide was removed from the classroom and an investigation was done.

I tried to get information on the investigation that was being completed and was advised that the aide was working through a temp agency and that the agency was the one doing the investigations. During the investigation there were some people who said they heard the aide crack his knuckles and others said they did not. After the investigation the aide was allowed to remain in the school but would not work directly with Caleb.

After I contacted the school and found out that the aide would still be in the school I was in shock that someone who had physically touched my son would be allowed back at the school to work with children. I tried to contact the board of education and was advised that staffing is left to the schools discretion and that they were unable to assist me in this matter. This aide was working with children and there was nothing I could do about it.

In September 2019 after the start of the new school year the aide was released from her duties at the school.

Camera's would have helped in this situation because of the conflicting stories from adults in the room. Some said they heard his knuckles crack and others said they did not. If there had been camera's in the room then there would have been video to show if she had put her hands on Caleb. Criminal charges could have been filed against the aide if camera's had caught the

incident. Without camera's in the room we were left with the word of others. Camera's will hold teachers, aides and other adults as well as children accountable for their actions. It will also make adults think twice before they react.

Prior to this incident Caleb loved going to school and learning. Since this incident Caleb has been struggling with extreme anxiety. Every night when tucking Caleb into bed he asks me, "School tomorrow?" I respond, "Yes, school tomorrow." Caleb begins to cry and say, "I don't want to go to school!" He begins yelling "NO! NO! NO!" This breaks my heart.

A lot of times we do not think of the lasting effects incidents like this can have on children. However, if camera's were in the classroom this could have saved a 10 year old 4th grader from fearing elementary school. School should be somewhere safe and fun for children to learn. It is our responsibility to do what we can to ensure the safety of our children.

I stand for and urge everyone to vote in favor of HB0715 to protect all of our children.