



March 7, 2022

Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD. 21401

In Support of HB 1255: Education - Restraint and Seclusion – Requirements, Reporting and Training.

Members of the Maryland Senate's Education, Health and Environment Committee.

Our membership of over 1400 plus military and non-military families of children with disabilities FULLY support this bill here before you today.

As a parent and advocate for persons with disabilities, we/I can't help but support bill HB 1255 / SB 705. Having a child who was restrained and secluded due to his disabilities, because school staff failed to follow the steps outlined for them within his IEP with fidelity more times than I care to count, in both the elementary and middle school settings here in Anne Arundel County.

Restraint and Seclusion are outdated crisis management techniques still used in Maryland Schools across the state. There is a better way to de-escalate children in crisis or just simply having a bad day of dysregulated behavior. It's time for changes like the ones being proposed in HB 1255 / SB 705.

My son has over the years in public school become so anxious and frustrated by his learning environment that he has tried to hurt himself on several occasions. I try to imagine a situation where the school personnel would not just drag him down a hallway and lock him in an admin office to "calm down". But rather have staff, on the premises, that could help and aid by treating him like a human being, and not like a problem. Instead, these school personnel could use positive behavioral interventions (strategies and supports) that are both evidence-based and trauma-informed in their approaches to crisis management.

The scenario I described above plays out in schools all across our state and our nation every day. Individuals with mental challenges or disabilities become so frantic that they make bad decisions, resulting in physical harm, trauma - further mental harm, hand cuffs, arrests and in some cases even death.



Too many times our children are locked into rooms, with names like the “calm” room, “cooling off” room, “time out” room. It’s a form of solitary confinement, called “seclusion” in education settings. It is inhumane way to treat any individual that may be in a state of mental crisis. Worse yet is the option of having a child pinned to the floor by grown adults, causing physical harm to the child, the adults and leaving lasting mental scars due to the use of “restraint” techniques. These are the terms used in schools, when referring to seclusion and restraint. Make no mistake, there is a better way to treat our children with disabilities.

Educational models such as Ukeru offer modern, science-based approaches which also include trauma-informed practices, which in many cases replaces any need for antiquated behavior management options like seclusion and restraint. Ukeru and other modern teaching models help to guarantee brighter education outcomes and reduce any need for crisis management techniques. Let’s help train the next generation of educators in these proven, modern techniques so that we can educate rather than simply manage children with challenging behaviors due to their disabilities. Please help by supporting programs like this that put the skills in the hands of people that can help and have a positive impact within our communities statewide.

Our children are not animals, and should not be treated like problems that need to be contended with, rather than human beings with challenges, emotions and feelings. These barbaric practices of restraint and seclusion only cause lasting harm both physically and mentally to our most vulnerable populations of students. There is a better way forward for all education stakeholders.

We ask that your committee please support House Bill 1255 / Senate Bill 705, by returning a favorable report.

Thank you for your time, and for considering our testimony today.

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