

As a mother with three children in the public school system, I recognize we all collectively put trust into those who are hired to both educate and keep our children safe. As a mother to two with special needs, and one who is completely nonverbal, it is a different trust than other families ever have to imagine. I would like to share my child's story and urge a **favorable report** for HB126. I also hope sharing this will spur further legislation to protect our most vulnerable school populations.

My son attended preschool which was based in the elementary school setting, and it was a fantastic mixed inclusive setting, providing both the typical and diverse learning most parents want for their special needs child. But after a few weeks into the school year, my child no longer ran to the bus with a smile and he began to avoid getting ready, whereas weeks before, he was trying to beat me out of the house to get his bus. He could not tell me if he wasn't feeling well, wanted to stay at home and play or was he trying to avoid actual work, which was my assumption of my then little man, 3 feet tall, 45 lb 4-year-old.

Several weeks of this avoidance behavior, I had my answer. I received a call from my school principal asking to discuss a complaint filed against his special education teacher for direct physical aggressions and abuse, as well as sexually explicit language used in front of my son and his special education classmates.

To say I was shocked would be an understatement. It took five teachers and one with tenure to bravely file a district complaint after witnessing my son being physically injured by his teacher; listening to her explicitly discuss inappropriate adult matters in front of him and his classmates as they had their snack time. I also learned four school team members had made verbal complaints prior and it took a specific incident when the tenured teacher had seen enough- he was pulled across her classroom floor by his arm, hitting stairs and furniture along the way, including his head several times, to transition him to the next class. It took the school a full week to contact me, providing me no way to see if my son had a physical injury by going to his pediatrician

on the day of the incident and my child had to continually go back to the class and to the teacher in question throughout this initial response time.

These incidents, however, did not take place only in the special education room. It took place on the playground multiple times, where he was pulled, again by one arm, down a metal climbing equipment and hit his back on every bar on the way down, purposefully to make a point, and repeatedly to the point of the several physical interventions and verbal complaints by several staff members. The classroom incident described above was in the music room- not in a special ed room. The proposed legislation is a step in the right direction- it would have at least caught the sexually explicit language at snack time for a 4-year-old class, but who would have viewed the tape without a complaint, and would it have picked up sound as well as the video? The majority of special ed students are in home schools as the federal IDEA act provides for, mixed with typical students and in and out of all classrooms throughout the day.

I ask you to consider these questions and enhance the language to have nonpartial monitoring, and I want to explain the nonpartial comment. The teacher in question was removed from the classroom after the weeklong in-school investigation and the district then began their internal process during which the local teacher union provided the teacher in question an attorney for the closed-door process, which I was not part of in anyway. After about two months, as described to me, the decision was to transfer her because she was tenured and protected as a union member.

It was then explained to me in a private conversation she had been transferred twice in the two previous school years and when a teacher is transferred, the previous records inclusive of complaints are sealed and the new administrator (principal) is not made aware of any previous complaints. I was asked to consider allowing her back in my son's classroom to avoid another transfer and to allow her to continue teaching my son as a way to allow the administrator to oversee the issue. Having two special needs children at the time in the same school, both who are unable to communicate around a teacher who would have had ample opportunity to be alone, with no cameras, with my children was a horrible and unimaginable position to place a parent in. Ultimately, I was not strong enough to agree to this and she was transferred. I simply had to protect my children.

Two months later, she was **again** placed on administrative leave at her next school, the fourth in three school years. Adding cameras are the right next step but we still have a long staircase to climb in assuring our children are safe.