

Submitter: Jessa Reinhardt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure: SB790

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice Chair Robinson, and Members of the Committee,

I am a Public Employee, Member of the Oregon Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorder, and parent to autistic children. I am writing to you today as a parent and community member to urge you to pass Senate Bill 790. The absolute hardest aspect of raising neurodiverse children is the fear and challenges surrounding their care outside of the home. That fear does not end when they walk into the school building. As a family, we have chosen to homeschool our children, knowing that although there is tremendous effort to make public education accessible, equitable, and safe, we just are not there yet. All one has to do is visit social media to see the frequency, intensity, and impact of restraint and seclusion in schools. Family members of mine who work in classrooms have witnessed children forced into dark, empty rooms while instructors hold the door closed while the child cries for help.

One newspaper found in their investigation that “since 1989, at least 85 children, teenagers and young adults 21 and younger have died after being restrained or kept in seclusion in public and private schools, juvenile justice centers, residential facilities or other settings that cater to people with special needs.”* Children like Xavier Hernandez who was killed at age 21 due to banned restraints performed by school staff, Cornelius Frederick who was killed at age 16 by six staff members performing restraints on him for over 10 minutes, and David Hess who was 17 who was held down and punched in the ribs resulting in death by suffocation.

Senate Bill 790 is the next step in ensuring that our state's most vulnerable children receive the care and respect they deserve. It will ensure that those who violate restraint and seclusion laws are held liable for the abuse they cause, physically, emotionally, and mentally. Restraint and seclusions have been documented to leave lifelong trauma to those who experience it. Eventually, I hope the passage of this bill will lead to even greater change such as more support in the classroom so that seclusions are no longer lawful and restraints are no longer necessary. Until then, adults who violate restraint and seclusion laws need to be charged for the crimes they commit.

Thank you,
Jessa Reinhardt
Vernonia, OR

*Link to news article referenced above: <https://www.ctinsider.com/projects/2022/child->

deaths-school-restraint-
seclusion/#:~:text=A%20Hearst%20Newspapers%20investigation%20found,to%20pe
ople%20with%20special%20needs.