

March 17, 2025

RE: Oppose HB 3835

Dear Chair Hartman, Vice Chair Nguyen, Vice Chair Scharf, and Members of the Committee,

Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 3835

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I am writing to strongly oppose House Bill 3835 as it pertains to the use of restraint and seclusion in schools. As a parent, I have witnessed firsthand how these practices harm children, particularly those with disabilities. My son, Zeke, was subjected to restraint and seclusion in ways that not only violated his dignity but also failed to support his ability to regulate and learn.

One of the most concerning experiences was when Zeke was placed in a so-called "sensory room," which was used as a seclusion space rather than a place for true regulation. He was given a choice: enter the room voluntarily or be restrained and forced in. Once inside, staff stood outside the closed door, making him feel as though he could not leave. Rather than de-escalating the situation, this isolation increased his distress, making it impossible for him to self-regulate until I arrived.

This is not an isolated incident. Schools often justify restraint and seclusion under the guise of safety, but in reality, these measures are frequently used to control behavior rather than address underlying needs. The current system does not account for implicit bias in determining when restraint or seclusion is used. Staff perceptions of student behavior—especially for neurodivergent children—can be influenced by personal biases, leading to inappropriate and excessive use of these extreme interventions.

Furthermore, while schools claim that seclusion and restraint are last resorts, the reality is that they are often the first response to behaviors that could be addressed through trauma-informed and relationship-based strategies. Instead of making schools safer, these practices create environments of fear and mistrust, particularly for students with disabilities.

Any legislation addressing the welfare of children should prioritize eliminating restraint and seclusion, not modifying provisions to allow their continued misuse. Oregon must invest in training staff in de-escalation techniques, implementing true sensory regulation spaces (rather than disguised seclusion rooms), and ensuring that students are supported in ways that honor their dignity and rights.

I urge you to oppose any provisions in HB 3835 that allow the continued use of restraint and seclusion. Our children deserve better.

Sincerely,
Samantha Patterson
Beaverton, OR

