

My name is Gabrielle Guedon, and I am from Newberg. I am a person with a disability. I am also a self-advocate who runs a non-profit called Oregon Self-Advocacy Coalition (OSAC). The organization is made up of self-advocates throughout the state. We are the adults that would have been restrained in the past before better protections were put in place. Those protections give children freedom to know they are safe at school or in child-care settings, yet HB 3835 would weaken the protections and that is why I am opposed to it.

Restraints not only may hurt the children, but it affects them at home too as they are upset, and it creates a response of fear and trauma flashbacks. My mom had a lot of foster kids who had high needs. The kids my family fostered growing up were the same kids who would be restrained in schools. Even in normal classes they were restrained and mistreated in ways that impacted them the rest of the day. A lot of the kids are non-verbal, so we would not know until we saw bruises on them in the bath that they would react to painfully.

My sister Lydia has been in my life for 22 years, and she had a lot of disability symptoms that would intensify because at school she was grabbed and hurt. If restrained at school, she would often self-hurt at home after these abusive incidents by biting herself or hitting her head due to the triggers. During one incident teacher's assistants had bruised her and thrown her against the wall. She also has a bleeding disorder that meant she would get hurt worse than other people. Back then those staff simply quit before abuse investigators conducted any investigation or found abuse. They were not even given reprimands by the school district. Nobody should ever be ramming my sister against a wall.

It's important to understand that, when you restrain kids unnecessarily, you're putting yourself and them in a position to get injured or experience trauma. Even in situations where they need to be restrained, they may not know the difference and that creates trauma too. Problem solving and safety protocols should come first.

Strong abuse prevention laws prevent people from restraining children with disabilities that otherwise would cause scars for life and effect interactions in other settings. For my sister, she still gets triggered to this day. Years after her school experiences with abuse, she had reversions back to her mental state about what happened to her at school as she tried to participate in day programs. She doesn't get restrained at her day program, but she can still feel the impacts her whole life from triggers that remind her of school restraints.

We have developed safety protocols over the years that allow Lydia to have disability-related episodes without being restrained. For example, we have safe spaces that are open in our house where Lydia can break down but also leave freely. One of her transition programs had a similar approach where they would let her roam freely sometimes crawling on the ground to let her get her energy out. It's not a black and white situation in terms of what we can do to keep children with disabilities secure. However, the incidents where staff intervene with restraints needs to be strategic, because it puts everybody in the situation at risk.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to HB 3825 that weakens kid's safety.