

Below is a link to the video testimony of Andrea Leoncavallo in opposition to HB 3835:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niz67aTZgLQ>

Andrea Leoncavallo of Portland gives testimony on HB 3835, sharing her daughter's traumatic experience being secluded and locked in a classroom at school rather than calling her parents despite having a safety plan to contact her mother. Andrea discusses the dangerous impacts of potentially loosening laws and oversight that would make seclusion, isolation and restraint laws more subjective.

Please refer to the enclosed written statement for further details.

My name is Andrea Leoncavallo and I live in Portland. My daughter, Emily, is 8 and my son is 11. My son has been going to school since he was three. Emily has always had trouble with school. We are now home-schooling and she leads the learning. She's very into video games and storytelling. She loves rollerskating, swimming, visiting tea houses and talking.

Emily is Autistic with PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance). She has a really hard time regulating her nervous system and can have explosive fight or flight reactions to feeling threatened. She was placed in an SES (Social Emotional Skills) classroom since kindergarten. She went half of last year from on a shortened school day for two hours a day at Sabin Elementary. She loved going. She made great friends, she won awards, and she loved participating, learning and belonging. If she had a meltdown they always called me right away and would go and wait for her to calm down and take her home. She'd always feel safe returning because of the empathy of everyone in her class.

But with this year's new teacher and new counselor everything was different including the kids (many of who graduated out of the class). From the first day Emily was having a lot of meltdowns. We told the teacher, "when she starts melting down please call me." She needs space and safety to calm down.

Two weeks into school they chose to "ride it out with her" and locked her in a classroom secluded from other kids with just the teacher and the counselor for two hours. She was screaming the entire time. Whenever she asked the adults to go home, they would tell her she had to stay until the end of the day. She said it felt like being in "prison" and could not get over the trauma of being so trapped. They said they needed to do it for her safety because she had taken off her clothes. But it was not for her safety to keep her from being able to contact me or have me there.

The next day when I met with the teacher and the counselor they apologized and understood that the situation was unsafe for Emily. They said they'd never do that again and next time they would call me after 20 minutes of Emily being in fight or flight. But Emily would never feel safe in that room again.

When you're the parent of a disabled child and have to trust people you don't know to care for your child in loving, patient, gentle ways. Loosening abuse laws and making them more subjective is troubling. Keeping her in a classroom for two hours screaming and not able to have a safe person brought to the classroom is "abusive" to this child.

Loosening laws and oversight, which HB 3835 does, is bad considering they have a lot of leeway as it is. Responsible abuse prevention laws mean people are more careful when they know they could and should be held accountable for touching or secluding children.

Something that happens in abusive situations is that the people who are the victims of the abuse can be blamed for way the abusive systems treat them. More subjective abuse laws permit school officials to blame the child for the incidents that occur.

They did not have to seclude my child for two hours. They would say it was for her own good and reasonable because she had not calmed down and because she had taken off her clothes. But it's not reasonable to seclude a child experiencing a behavioral problem when there is a safety plan to contact a parent. She cannot calm down surrounded by people she doesn't trust.

For those reasons, I am opposed to HB 3835.

Thank you for your time.