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On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835

While reviewing this bill, I've noticed countless organizations applauding HB 3835 for easing restrictions on restraint and inclusion. However, Oregon has long struggled to incorporate individual and family voices, choosing instead to amplify the opinions of organizations that profit millions from caring for vulnerable populations.

The root problem is the shortage of suitable placements and a qualified workforce. Yet, when effective solutions—such as SB 909 and SB 538 introduced this session—are proposed, our legislature hesitates due to cost. Similarly, when programs designed to improve access, like SB 1557 from the last session, are codified into law, Oregon debates implementation instead of moving to action.

We must listen to families, to children, and to the adults who have endured years of abuse within Oregon's Systems of Care. Increasing the use of restraints will not solve workforce shortages—it will only instill greater fear in our youth, lead to more frequent use of restraints and seclusion, and endanger our most vulnerable citizens.

One testimony recounted a case where a man was placed in an unsuitable environment, with the proposed solution being the use of prone restraint. This approach would likely foster more aggression, diminish trust, and escalate reliance on potentially deadly restraints.

Seclusion should be completely eliminated. Restraints must only be employed to avert serious harm or death, and every use should be followed by an investigation. We will never meet the needs of individuals or support our employees by broadening the use of restraints and seclusion under reduced oversight. Increasing these measures does not build a stronger workforce or improve access to proper placements—it only paves the way for more abuse.

Oregon must make a full, creative investment in solutions that genuinely expand access to care. Humans are not inherently violent; they need support, not punitive measures, to truly thrive.