

March 26, 2025

**Senate Committee on Human Services**

RE: Senate Bill 1113

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

My name is Gabriel Lincoln. I am a junior in high school, and I experience developmental disabilities. Between the ages of 4 through 14, school staff regularly “put their hands on me” to try to force me to do things that I either did not understand, or did not want to do. I was not a rotten child. I was not a trouble-maker. My family did not experience any unsafe behaviors in our home. However, because of my autism, I did not understand that adults “get to tell kids what to do”. That was a lagging skill I struggled to understand.

I was assigned to a self-contained classroom for special education. When teachers and classroom aides put their hands on me to force me to comply with their wishes, I would go into fight or flight mode. And it was mostly fight.

I was restrained and secluded hundreds of times in school settings. One school built a literal seclusion cell just for me – out of wood and sheetrock. It was a very small space that allowed school staff to barricade me using a mat. They would trap me in there for long periods of time. Each incident, and sometimes this happened multiple times in a day, was **EXTREMELY TRAUMATIC**.

I experienced suicidal ideation starting around age of 7, and attempted suicide numerous times in 8<sup>th</sup> grade which required acute care. I then spent over two years in a FANTASTIC day treatment program. During my time at the day treatment program, staff never put their hands on me! Not once! I was NOT a different person than I had been, while in my local schools. The difference was not with the youth, but with the staff. This day treatment program invests in intensive ongoing training, and their staff have many years of experience and longevity with their program. They also have incredible leadership with vast experience. All of this together allows their staff to keep kids safe, with a NO-hands-on approach.

IT CAN BE DONE! My experience proves it! School staff SHOULD NEVER restrain or seclude children as a way to force compliance. Only true life-and-death situations should qualify for restraints.

I am SO HAPPY for this bill, because if it is passed, it will prescribe specific requirements for when restraints and seclusions are acceptable, and also, how they should be performed.

I hope that this bill passes so that no other disabled youth will feel suicidal like I was. And, so that children of color will no longer be subject to inappropriate restraints and seclusion based on targeting or unconscious bias.

I am doing better much better now, and participate on a Black Youth Suicide Prevention Coalition because I do not want any other kids to have these same experiences or feel the way I did. Thank you for all the work you are doing to set up these **guard rails** to protect Oregon’s disabled youth.

Respectfully,

Gabriel T. Lincoln