

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 Roberta Lincoln. I am a parent of two children of color, who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as mental and behavioral health challenges. As you have heard from my son in his testimony, he was restrained and secluded hundreds of times in school settings from ages 4 through 14. Because of his autism, he had significant lagging skills in many areas – one of which relates to the adult/youth hierarchy. My son could not understand that “adults DO get to tell children what to do”. My son was NOT a defiant child, nor was he oppositional – even though the school district believed so – and so the school district’s staff did significant damage to my son, causing him monumental trauma on a daily basis during his critical formative and early teen years.

Because of all of the trauma, he now experiences SEVERE PTSD. Please pause to think about this – due to this trauma, he now associates any touch with fear, pain, and violation, even hugs from family. My son MUST give prior consent before anyone can touch him for any reason. Without that, unexpected touch is immensely disturbing to him and can trigger negative reactions. He also struggles immensely to form relationships due to that fear and distrust of others.

Without very specific guidelines that mandate what is appropriate and what is inappropriate as it relates to restraint and seclusions in school settings – schools across the state will continue to take advantage of the lack of direction. Because schools are not investing in safer hands-free approaches, the problem continues to escalate statewide.

For example, in our school district, administration chooses to hire college students to lead the most challenging classrooms – many of whom have no teaching license yet – who get assigned to teach intellectually and developmentally disabled youth with high behaviors. It is no wonder staff and students are getting hurt – they are all set up for failure.

There are evidence-based, trauma informed approaches to addressing challenging behaviors in children and adolescents that are recognized worldwide. Examples of these include Collaborative Problem Solving and Collaborative and Proactive Solutions. When these are implemented in homes, schools and medical settings, following appropriate training of all staff working with youth who are experiencing behaviors, the numbers of injuries, restraints and seclusions are shown to have dramatic decreases across various settings.

Positive hands-off approaches are what Oregon should be moving toward, investing in, and requiring statewide in all educational systems. The passage of this bill is critically essential for

the safety and well being of both youth and school staff statewide. It offers the guidance that is currently lacking in educational settings.

When my son wanted to go to the moon, at age 7, rather than returning to school where he was being abused... and when he attempted suicide multiple times... and nearly succeeded – it was both heart breaking and heart wrenching for our family.

If you ask school unions, and school administrators, as well as advocacy organizations that support families and those with disabilities – they all agree that we need smaller class sizes, more staff, and vastly greater amounts of training to be able to support children who struggle – and these numbers are growing. I believe there are viable solutions, but the resources are too limited. The outcome is that more and more youth are being abused in school settings, and school staff are being harmed as well. Because those necessary adjustments cannot or will not be made, this bill stands as the only beacon of hope in a very dark time for families like mine – which will provide the added protection for youth, and especially those experiencing disabilities, in schools.

While I appreciate that my son is doing better... there are so many more children who are doing worse and worse, and that number will only continue to grow. If the goal is for our school systems in this state to create the state's Mental Health clients of tomorrow – then Oregon is succeeding. Since hands-off approaches are not being mandated in educational settings in Oregon, this bill is the RIGHT way to protect our youth in schools.

Thank you for your consideration,

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Roberta Lincoln, Parent with lived experience and Parent Advocate