

Submitter: Jeni Canaday

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Education

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1572

Chair Fredrick and members of the committee,

My name is Jeni Canaday and I am a parent with many years of personal lived experience supporting my Autistic son through distress behaviors in the school system. I am very concerned about the impact this bill would have on misunderstood children.

It is imperative that we hold onto an empathetic lens when we are talking about the behavior challenges faced by struggling children. All too often I see disabled children and their families being blamed and shamed by an educational system that fails to comply with the IDEA Laws that were put in place to make true inclusion a real possibility.

Our schools are in crisis. Teachers do not have the ability to form trusting and safe relationships with every student in a classroom due to class sizes and inappropriate behavioral interventions. The result of this is often the suspension and or push out of some of our most vulnerable students. The children that struggle to tolerate an environment that has inadvertently set them up to fail.

We cannot claim students experiencing distress behaviors are the problem when the Behavior data does not tell a child's story. It just points to a need. Punishing struggling children will not fix a resource problem.

When a neurodivergent student is having meltdowns because they are being sneakily teased for wearing noise canceling headphones, should they be banned from the classroom? This kind of bullying happens to Disabled children all the time.

Children need to be understood and appropriately supported. The PBIS behavior intervention model used across the state is not working for the kids who need the most support. If we want to make our schools safe and inclusive we must change how we address behavior challenges in the classroom.

If staff were deeply trained in Co-regulation

Skills, and Collaborative Problem Solving, it would benefit the entire school community. Educating staff on Sensory Processing Disorder and teaching children about Neurodiversity is a necessity. We need a successful inclusion model that shifts the focus away from the ineffective behaviorist lens, and towards Relational Health.

When a school districts moves to a "full inclusion model" without having the proper trainings and supports in place, their Inclusion Model has already failed before it can even start.

Not only has it failed, but it has actually done harm. Because now all of the teachers who are left without the supports they need to provide a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment are frustrated, and distressed. Kids can feel that.

And the students who communicate their distress behaviorally, are seen by many as incapable of successfully integrating into the Gen. Ed. classroom without ever having been given a fair shot. An under resourced inclusion model is a set up for failure and passing this bill would put the civil rights of vulnerable children at risk.

Please vote no on SB1572. Thank you.