

## **HB25-1248 - Protect Students from Restraint & Seclusion Act**

Dear Madam Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Kristina Ericson. I am the Director of Policy and Outreach for the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council. I am writing today in support of HB25-1248.

The Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council is a 24 member, governor appointed, state council that advocates for systems change for Coloradans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). We are mandated by federal law to advise the Governor, General Assembly, and State Agencies on matters impacting people with developmental disabilities - which includes thousands of Colorado's students. Advocating for safe, inclusive, and equitable educational spaces for Colorado students is a key component of our work.

This bill would help ensure consistency, safety and dignity in addressing the behavior needs of students. This is critical to our work, as restraining and secluding students during school hours and activities is a practice that impacts students with disabilities at far higher rates than their non-disabled peers. Nationwide data shows that when schools enact alternatives to restraint and seclusion they maintain safety, reduce trauma, and increase educational outcomes for students. The Council believes that the use of restraint and seclusion in school settings is unsafe, potentially traumatizing, and of questionable value in emergency situations. The use of seclusion is unjust and unnecessary, and it is time we enact change to better protect students and inform their families in Colorado.

The Council stands in particular support of this Bill's requirements for accessible district profile reports, as current data surrounding the use of restraint and seclusion in Colorado schools is limited and outdated. In 2013, our Council published a report on the use of seclusion and restraints based on a grant-funded project with Disability Law Colorado. This project collected voluntary data, submitted by 120 of 183 school districts in Colorado - representing 57% of the total student population. Although more than a decade old, this report is some of the most recent data we have on this issue. We believe that if students are being harmed or isolated at school their loved ones, communities, and advocates deserve to know. We have heard horror stories from parents and community members throughout the decades about students with disabilities being harmed, left behind, and traumatized without their parents' knowledge. It is time to change this.

Colorado is a national leader in disability rights. When we advance protections for people with disabilities here there is a ripple effect throughout the nation. On behalf of our Council members, the communities we serve, and disabled students across the United States, thank you for considering a yes vote.

**Kristina Ericson**

Director of Policy and Outreach

Colorado Developmental Disabilities Council