

May 18, 2023

The Honorable Chris Murphy
136 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
332 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Don Beyer
1119 Longworth H.O.B.
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Scott
1201 Longworth H.O.B.
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Murphy, Sanders, and Representatives Beyer, and Scott,

The Autism Society of America writes to express gratitude for introducing the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) to ensure that our students are protected from restraints and seclusion. Students should never fear going to school as school should be a safe place for our students.

The use of restraint and seclusion is extremely dangerous, dehumanizing, and demoralizing to those involved and can lead to serious injury or even result in death. There is a tremendous negative emotional and physical impact on students who are restrained and secluded. For example, a 15-year-old boy with autism was restrained at school by four school employees for around 60-70 minutes on his stomach with his hands behind his back and shoulders and legs held down. After becoming non-responsive after 45 minutes, the restraint continued and he stopped breathing.¹ This is one of many sad instances of restraint and/or seclusion that has resulted in death.

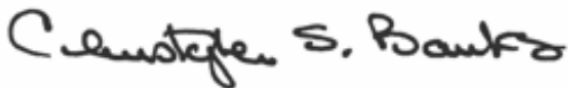
According to the 2017-2018 U.S. Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 101,990 students were found restrained at school or placed in seclusion – with 78% of students being students with disabilities, 22% of Black students subjected to

¹ National Disability Rights Network. (2009). Investigative report on abusive restraint and seclusion in schools. <https://www.ndrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SR-Report2009.pdf>

seclusion, and 34% Black students subjected to mechanical restraints.² A 2019 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that restraints and seclusion in K-12 public schools nationwide are implemented more frequently with students with disabilities and boys of color.³ Students with Autism are disproportionately impacted by these practices. Multiple states have taken necessary actions to pass laws that prohibit the use of restraint and seclusion in the classroom. However, there are still many states that do not have any guidance or restrictions on protecting children from these practices.

The Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) ensures that all students, especially students with disabilities and students of color, are not victims of restraint and seclusion. This bill ensures that educators and school personnel are trained on other positive behavior management strategies. We thank you for your continued commitment to promoting safe community living for people with disabilities. We look forward to working with you to pass this very crucial and important legislation. Thank you again for the introduction of this bill.

Sincerely,



Christopher S. Banks
President and CEO

² Office for Civil Rights. (2020). 2017-18 Civil rights data collection. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/restraint-and-seclusion.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term=

³ Nowicki, Jacqueline. (Feb. 27, 2019). Federal Data and Resources on Restraint and Seclusion. United States Government Accountability Office. Retrieved from <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/697114.pdf>