

Rev. Marvin J. Miller, D.Min (cand)

Thursday, 5 March 2015

Dear Sen. Steve Abrams:

Thank you for serving all the people of Kansas. As a father of a daughter born with significant intellectual disabilities, I have advocated for disability rights at the local and national level for nearly 13 years. My perspective is unique. After a long time serving as a Christian school administrator in both California and Kansas, I now pastor a congregation in Wellington. I also serve as a special education substitute within KSDE schools while completing my doctoral degree in disability theology.

During the last year, I was appointed to the KSDE SEAC committee which is comprised of a collaborative group of parents, teachers, and administrators and others representing a cross section of Kansas. By statute, *the council is required to maintain a majority of parents of persons with disabilities.*

During the last many years, this council has met numerous times with **all** the stakeholders represented in Kansas special education. After extensive testimony, the state board of education adopted SEAC recommendations to substantially limit restraint and seclusion, protecting all students in Kansas.

As a parent, I was extremely troubled by reports of past abuses. As a new council member, I challenged the depth of the current regulations, read other states statutes, and looked at national trends. At the end of my extensive investigation, I realize that the current ESI regulations as well as the proposed regulations already adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education are some of the most comprehensive, thoughtful, and detailed in the country.

My interactions with fellow parents, students, para-educators, and teachers in the schools confirm what I believe. Everyone wants schools to be safe. Everyone wants the least amount of restraint and seclusion. Everyone is working hard to implement current regulations and are seeing great success. My own daughter is excelling in a room which no longer has a seclusion area. KSDE and TASN have done a great job of training educators with positive behavior supports. **In short, the current ESI regulations and reporting put into place 2 years ago are now working!**

When examining the recently passed HB 2170, I am concerned about several things. **Overall, the bill in its current form reduces protections of the neediest individuals and moves the state several steps backward.** Much of the language has been wholesale adopted from current regulations SEAC helped formulate, but other areas remain vague. If those sections were corrected to reflect regulations KSDE has already adopted for non-public settings, school law enforcement, and a state review process of complaints, this bill has a chance to redeem itself. *Until it begins with at least the minimum of the protections already provided in KSDE regulations, I urge you to please **OPPOSE HB 2170** in current form.*

Regards,

Marvin J. Miller

Parent Member, KSDE Special Education Advocacy Council (SEAC) – District 10

Lead Pastor, Wellington First Assembly of God

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this letter are mine and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any agency or organization with which I am associated.