

Senator Steve Abrams, Chair
Senate Education Committee



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A chapter of The Arc of the United States

Dear Senator Abrams and members of the Committee:

For over 55 years The Arc of Douglas County has provide advocacy and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families and support networks. We currently serve over 140 people with developmental disabilities and their families throughout 5 counties. Many of the people we support are children; most, both children and adults, attended school in Kansas. You now have the opportunity to improve the school experience of those children currently served and to assure that what has happened to some of the adults we support will not happen again. You are currently considering HB2170, concerning seclusion and restrain of children in public schools. I am writing to ask you to approve this bill to assure children are safe and protected and that those protections are strong and enforceable.

In the past we have had to aid families whose children have been put in 'time out' in storage closets and forgotten or whose children have come home with red marks and bruises from incorrect holds and restraints. We know that handling children with behavior issues is challenging; teachers must find ways to help the child control his or her behavior while both protecting and teaching the other children in the classroom. However abuse or neglect cannot be tolerated; children need to be taught better behavior, not hurt or locked away. Teachers and para-educators who work directly with children with challenging behaviors must be taught approved and effective interventions; schools must have clearly defined procedures and be held accountable for assuring that that training is provided and procedures are followed.

Parents deserve to be treated as equal partners in the complaint process; they need to be able to bring forward complaints or mistreatment of their child to both the local school and, if needed, the state to assure than changes are made and their child is protected.

Parents of children with challenging behavior have been waiting for years for the KS Board of Education to make effective regulations on seclusion and restraint. The Board has not done so. HB 2170 will fix the flaws of the current regulations and assure that children are protected. It will prevent litigation and set clear policies for schools to follow. The Arc of Douglas County urges you to recommend this bill for passage.

Thank you for your dedication to the education and protection of Kansas children.

Sincerely,

Barbara Bishop, Executive Director