

November 23, 2020

Alexander J. Campbell
101 Any Road
Powhatan, VA 23139

The Honorable Jane Doe
0000 Longworth House Office Building RM 00
Washington, DC 20515

RE: The Keeping All Students Safe Act

Dear Congresswoman, Doe:

I am writing to you to encourage you to support the Keeping All Students Safe Act. My name is Alexander Campbell, I am an autistic self-advocate, and 10th grader in high school. I reside in Powhatan County.

I believe it is necessary to pass the Keeping All Students Safe Act to ensure students are safe at school. Restraint and seclusion has caused deaths, injuries, and often results in life-long trauma for both students and staff.

Restraint and seclusion also disproportionately impact students with disabilities, boys, and students of color. The US Department of Education¹ recently found that while students with disabilities make up 13% of all students, they make up 80% of the students who were physically restrained between 2017 and 2018, 41% of the students who were mechanically restrained between 2017 and 2018, and 77% of the students who were subjected to seclusion between 2017 and 2018. 18% of students with disabilities were black between 2017 and 2018, yet they made up 26% of students with disabilities who were physically restrained between 2017 and 2018, 34% of students with disabilities who were mechanically restrained between 2017 and 2018, and 22% of students with disabilities who were secluded between 2017 and 2018. While boys made up 66% of students with disabilities, they made up 83% of students with disabilities who were physically restrained between 2017 and 2018, 82% of students with disabilities who were mechanically restrained between 2017 and 2018, and 84% of students with disabilities who were secluded between 2017 and 2018. In order to change these tragic numbers, we must pass the Keeping All Students Safe Act.

Restraint and seclusion is also extremely fiscally irresponsible. One school in Virginia stopped using seclusion and significantly decreased their usage of restraint. In 13 years, they saved \$16 million in lost time expenses, turnover costs, and workers' compensation policy costs². By passing the Keeping All Students Safe Act, we can help ensure that taxpayer money is being better spent in our schools.

As someone who is a survivor of restraint and seclusion, this issue is extremely important to me. While I experienced dozens of instances of restraint and seclusion in four of our state's schools, I would like to tell about two of those instances. When I was 7 years old, my principal would literally drag me out of the time out area and into the seclusion room. After being shoved into the seclusion room, the principal would slam the door shut and pull a large wooden desk across the door so I could not leave. I remember hearing the scraping sound of the desk as it moved across the door, knowing that I was there, alone. The seclusion room itself was a converted storage closet with walls painted black and had a barred window. Not only did the principal put me in the seclusion room, he told me that if I ever told my parents he would lock me in that room every day. These rooms are dark and scary for children. At a different school, I was subjected to a restraint that sent me to the hospital. The teacher used a restraint that involved grabbing me by the throat and slamming me on the floor. She kept slamming me on the floor until I couldn't stand up any more. Even individuals that train people on how to perform restraints, will admit that this was not a restraint. This was a pure act of physical violence, in order to assert dominance and authority. The school later admitted that she was improperly trained. The school was placed on an improvement plan by the State, but nothing happened to the teacher. Instead the school moved the teacher to a non-verbal classroom, so she could repeat the same behaviors, and no one would have a voice to stand up for themselves.

I would like you to vote in support of the Keeping All Students Safe Act and would appreciate a response to my letter. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexander J. Campbell". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Alexander J. Campbell