



**ALLIANCE
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**SECLUSION
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Disability Organizations: MUSIC Is Dangerous

Organizations condemn and urge extreme caution after movie team fails to address recommendations to protect autistic people

WASHINGTON, D.C. – [CommunicationFIRST](#), the [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#), and the [Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint](#) today expressed grave concern about the soon-to-be-released, [Golden Globe-nominated](#) movie MUSIC, directed by singer-songwriter Sia. Following a widespread outcry by the disability community, Sia’s team reached out and briefly engaged CommunicationFIRST before restraint scenes from the film were leaked on Twitter. But communication broke down after the MUSIC team failed to respond to and address CommunicationFIRST’s key recommendations – including cutting the restraint scenes – after a committee of nonspeaking and autistic people were invited to screen the film last week and provide feedback.

“MUSIC’s restraint scenes will undoubtedly cause harm to autistic people. Because many autistic people have experienced restraint, some will be traumatized by watching the film. The movie also irresponsibly suggests that people experiencing meltdowns should be restrained, which could not be further from the truth,” **Tauna Szymanski, Executive Director of CommunicationFIRST**, said of MUSIC, which received two Golden Globe Award nominations today. “By not removing the restraint scenes or even providing a warning, those behind the movie are promoting a traumatizing and potentially deadly form of restraint that is illegal in over 30 US states. We provided several concrete recommendations aimed at protecting people who may be imperiled by this film. We are saddened that the MUSIC team does not appear willing to take even the most basic precautions to mitigate the likely harm and deep trauma the movie may cause many nonspeaking and autistic people.”

“MUSIC doesn’t just promote harmful stereotypes about autistic people – it shows restraints that have killed members of our community as necessary and loving acts,” said **Zoe Gross, Director of Advocacy at the Autistic Self Advocacy Network**. “This film should never have been made, and it shouldn’t be shown.”

“Physical restraint is an outdated crisis management technique used in schools, psychiatric facilities, hospitals, and prisons. Physical restraint is disproportionately used on disabled and marginalized populations. Physical restraint is dangerous and can lead to significant trauma, serious injuries, and even death. There are far better ways to work with people that need compassion and support,” said **Guy Stephens, Founder and Executive Director of the Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint**. “The depiction of physical restraint in the film perpetuates the idea that physical restraint is an acceptable practice. It is not. The film contains at least two scenes in which prone restraint is used on an autistic character and it is implied that it is safe and therapeutic. It is not. We recommend that these scenes be removed from the film as they will cause harm to autistic people around the world.”

As a counterpoint to help humanize nonspeaking autistic people in the public eye, CommunicationFIRST plans to release a short film in February featuring actual nonspeaking autistic people. In addition, the three organizations will make available a toolkit with resources about nonspeaking autism, augmentative and alternative communication, what to do when you see someone having a meltdown, and the dangers of restraint.

The three organizations also recommend that Sia pull the film, apologize to the autistic community, and partner with advocacy groups to promote adequate services for disabled people and raise awareness about the need to end the institutional bias in disability services.

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CommunicationFIRST is the only national, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil rights of the more than five million people of all ages in the United States who, due to disability or other condition, are unable to rely on speech alone to communicate. Run by and for people with expressive communication disabilities, CommunicationFIRST advances its mission by educating and engaging the public, advocating for policy and practice reform, and engaging the justice system to ensure access to effective communication, to end prejudice and discrimination, and to promote equity, justice, inclusion, and opportunity for our historically marginalized community. <https://CommunicationFIRST.org>

*The **Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)** is a disability rights organization run by and for autistic people. ASAN believes that the goal of autism advocacy should be a world in which autistic people enjoy equal access, rights, and opportunities. For more information about the organization, please visit: <https://autisticadvocacy.org>*

*The **Alliance Against Seclusion and Restraint** is a highly diverse grassroots coalition comprised of neurodivergent and neurotypical parents, grandparents, autistic self-advocates, attorneys, educators, and others. The group is dedicated to changing minds, laws, policies, and practices so that restraint and seclusion are reduced and eliminated in all settings. For more information about the organization, please visit: <https://www.endseclusion.org>*