

Ashley Cirone
Harrington
LD 165

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am writing as a classroom teacher whom is neither for nor against LD 165. Instead of thinking about a short-term solution that will not spark any real change, I ask the committee to consider reasons as to why schools are seeing an increase in dangerous student behaviors. Students do well when they can, and when they can't we need to reflect and adjust programming in order to see success.

Research suggests that suspension is generally ineffective in addressing the root causes of student behaviors and can actually lead to negative long-term consequences for students. While suspension is often used as a punitive disciplinary tool to correct behavior, studies show it tends to have limited benefits in improving behavior and can harm academic performance and emotional well-being.

Our most vulnerable students do not need to be sent home, instead they need appropriate programming and alternative placements to meet their educational needs. Far too often, public schools have children with needs that reach far outside of the general education setting within public schools. They may need day treatment, medication management, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Applied Behavioral Analysis, or the support of a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, I could go on and on...Many schools, especially those in low income or rural areas, do not have access to these services due to a lack of monetary support or availability and therefore the public schools end up dealing with the fallout. Disruptive, physical, and dangerous behaviors are scary and absolutely need intervention, but when children are having a hard time regulating their emotional response, they are communicating to us that what we are doing is not working.

Suspending kids is the easy way out. It takes care of a behavior for a few days and may give staff and students a reprieve, but if nothing changes in regards to their setting or programming how can we expect the behavior to have changed?

The pendulum needs to stop swinging on this issue, instead we need to focus on bolstering resources for public schools so we can adequately handle and meet the needs of ALL the students within our communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

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