

We are submitting joint testimony today as lifelong educators and experts in school behavior to express our strong opposition to LD 1248.

Sarah Wilkinson is a resident of Old Orchard Beach and an assistant professor in the Special Education Department at the University of Southern Maine where she prepares special educators and conducts research in Maine schools. She holds a Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Connecticut. Her area of expertise is in behavioral interventions, behavior management, and positive behavior supports.

Gretchen Scheibel is a resident of Topsham and an assistant research professor at the University of Kansas where she works remotely to conduct educational research in Maine. She holds a Ph.D. in special education with a specialization in evidence-based practice and economic evaluation from the University of Kansas. Her area of expertise is in students with and at risk of behavioral disorders, evidence-based behavioral interventions, implementation frameworks, and economic evaluation of behavior interventions and frameworks.

We are providing testimony today as private citizens, and our views do not necessarily reflect those of the University of Southern Maine or the University of Kansas.

As lifelong educators of students who exhibit severe and dangerous behavior and special education researchers whose primary focus is to support educators to positively and effectively address student behavior, we find this bill to be deeply problematic. Although we understand the intention of the bill is to provide support to teachers and presumably increase safety, the effect of the language changes proposed in this bill will most likely be to increase the use of escorts, restraint, and seclusion with students, as well as to further underreport the occurrences of these practices. This increase in physical behavior management and seclusion will pose not only a risk to students in the form of physical injury and emotional trauma, but it will also expose educators to the same risks. Educators who use physical behavior management and seclusion are at risk of physical injury as well as the emotional injury that comes with having to place your hands on a child, hold them down, and or lock them in a room- even if it is for their own safety. Instead of expanding use of these procedures, we should be focusing on strengthening efforts to prevent and reduce the intensity of challenging student behavior.

Again, it is clear the meaning of this bill is well intentioned and meant to support educators, but in our experience as educators and our expertise as researchers, we feel strongly that it will do the opposite. The bill may address a crisis in the moment, but it does not address the ongoing behavior crisis. Restraint and seclusion do not provide a solution for the reasons why students engage in such intense behavior. Without addressing the actual cause of the problem, the problem will continue to exist, regardless of the regulations around restraint and seclusion. As behavior problems continue to exist, the use of physical behavior management will further fuel the negative impacts of persistent challenging behavior, leading to increased use of restraint and seclusion practices.

Further, support for the use of these practices draws attention and resources away from the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and positive behavior practices that are truly needed to positively address and prevent challenging student behavior. Please see the report we presented

to the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee on 4/14 for further details and recommendations on how to address this crisis: <https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/wpsites.maine.edu/dist/e/97/files/2025/03/MEPRI-Report-on-Challenging-Student-Behavior-March-2025.pdf>.

As previously shared with the Committee, we are eager and available to provide additional guidance, resources, and support related to any bills or work groups related to student behavior in schools.

Additional resources about the dangers of restraint and seclusion can be found at the following links:

- [Preventing Restraint and Seclusion in Schools \(National Center on PBIS\)](#)
- [Restraint and Seclusion Alternatives in All U.S. States and Territories: A Review of Legislation and Policies \(National Center on PBIS\)](#)
- [Dear Colleague Letter: Restraint and Seclusion of Students with Disabilities \(U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights\)](#)
- [A Dreaded Part of Teachers' Jobs: Restraining and Secluding Students \(NPR\)](#)