

Dear Chairman Langley, Chairperson Kornfield, and members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

I am the mother of an amazing autistic five-year-old, soon to enter kindergarten in Maine's public school system. Like most autistic individuals, my child was born with highly sensitive neuroception. Through no choice of his own, he perceives higher threat in his environment than the average five-year-old. He and those who love him work extra hard to help him feel safe and to regulate his emotions.

When my child feels safe and loved he thrives: He's an early reader, a goofy joke-teller, a dedicated friend, a snuggler, and a builder. When my child feels unsafe (which he is neurobiologically vulnerable to) he becomes panicky, oppositional, and impulsive. It's his fight or flight response (we all have one).

Honestly, I am terrified to send my brilliant, creative, and loving five-year old to kindergarten this fall because he is vulnerable to being traumatized at school. If a teacher gives a direction and his autonomic nervous system perceives that direction as a threat, I do hope that teacher will help him feel safe again. If they choose restraint/seclusion it will only escalate his stress-response, add to his trauma, and increase the chances of it repeating.

There are proven ways for schools to safely and drastically reduce their rates of restraint and seclusion. Dr. Ross Greene's model has assembled [extensive evidence](#) both in schools and in juvenile detention facilities to show it's efficacy.

Please, I urge you to support LD1373, to keep my child (and countless others) safe. Thank you.

Sarah Pearce