

Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and members of the committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, my name is Angel Richardson. I want to share with you why I am for the bill LD 1373 "An Act To Keep All Maine Students Safe by Restricting the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Schools". My son was restrained and secluded too many times to count. He would be physically restrained with a two person reverse assist to a seclusion room every time he would struggle and have challenging behaviors due to having Autism, tic disorder, ADHD, and generalized anxiety disorder. He then would have the door shut while a staff member watched through a window. He would beg to come out of the room and would repeatedly bang his head on the concrete wall, scream, and cry. Once he wore himself out crying and banging his head he would then sit on the bare floor quietly until they let him out. After so many times of the nurse having to do a quick check up on him due to the head banging the staff stopped using that reserved seclusion room and switched it to a closet room between two classrooms which had a door on both sides with a window and a curtain on it. Staff would take turns sitting in front of the door because they would tire out from trying to force his way out. One of the days that this had happened it was so hot out that surrounding schools had early dismissal due to the excessive heat. This room had no ventilation so you can just imagine how hot it was in there. Once that was known about, they started holding the door shut but keeping a toe in the door so that they were not breaking any laws. I was lied to about it numerous times until I was able to see it with my own eyes and then they would say that they had a foot in the door so it was ok to do. There are too many loop holes concerning restraint and seclusion. The right of a free appropriate public education was taken away from my son. My son went through counseling and was diagnosed with a form of post traumatic syndrome disorder from all of those times he was forcefully restrained and secluded when other methods could have been used. Certain smells and any small room can trigger him. I hope you strongly consider passing this bill to stop the excessive and improper use of restraint and seclusion in the State of Maine. It's time to think of these children and what lasting effects it has on them. I pray that no other child has to go through what my son did but I know for a fact that it is still happening and it breaks my heart. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Angel Richardson