



Kathy Hamblen
Director of Special Services

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Heather Perry
Superintendent of Schools

April 27, 2021

Dear Members Affairs Committee:

My name is Emily Stevens and I am the District Behavior Specialist for the Gorham School System. I feel I need to write and share my concerns regarding the negative impact I believe [LD 1373](#), 'An Act to Keep All Maine Students Safe by Restricting the Use of Seclusion and Restraint in Schools', could have on our public schools in Maine.

As the Behavior Specialist, I teach physical management techniques as well as help determine when and if seclusion would ever be necessary when helping students in crisis. During our yearly refresher training as well as throughout the school year, we focus heavily on crisis prevention and de-escalation techniques. I am proud that we, as a district, have been able to significantly reduce the needs of using physical management and/or seclusion with our students. By focusing on the importance of de-escalation and the methods we have available to reduce crises, our need to use either restraint or seclusion has been virtually eliminated.

Unfortunately, there will always be moments when we have to use restraint and/ or seclusion as a last resort to keep our students and staff safe. However, we have had times when we have had students who required physical guidance to stay safe.

One incident that comes to mind is a student who has had an extensive trauma history involving being held down and abused. Knowing that using a restraint with her may escalate her unsafe behavior rather than de-escalate her, we opted , with parent awareness and consent, to use seclusion in the rare instance that she was not able to stay safe at school. Interestingly (and horrifyingly) enough, we have had a student whose trauma history includes being left alone for long periods of time and intense neglect. We would never use seclusion to help de escalate him. These are just two glaring examples of why we would need both physical management and seclusion in our behavior management toolbox.

This Act will have an enormous impact on how we can preserve the safety of our students and staff. Please consider these comments, stories, and testimonials when deciding on how you will place your vote. I hope that you will join us in our work of keeping our schools safe.

Sincerely,

Emily Stevens, M. Ed.
District Behavior Specialist

Gorham Public Schools