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**TESTIMONY OF AFRICAN CARIBBEAN AMERICAN PARENTS
OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, INC. (AFCAMP)
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 927
AN ACT CONCERNING SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT IN SCHOOLS**

FEBRUARY 24, 2015

Submitted by: Ann R. Smith, JD, MBA
Executive Director

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc. (AFCAMP) in support of Raised Bill No. 927. AFCAMP is a parent-driven nonprofit organization with a mission to educate, empower and engage parents and community to improve quality of life for children with special needs and others at risk of education inequity or system involvement. We receive many requests for advocacy assistance from parents and caregivers of children, with and without Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), who have been subjected to restraint and seclusion practices. This legislation will begin to address a number of concerns about the use of seclusion and restraint and the harmful effects such use has on children.

Using State Department of Education (SDE) data, the Office of the Child Advocate recently reported that there have been more than 30,000 incidents of restraint and seclusion affecting 2,500 children annually between 2012 and 2014. SDE data also show that there were over 1,300 incidents of injury to children during a restraint or seclusion, with some of those injuries considered to be serious. There are other disturbing SDE data concerning the use of restraint and seclusion on our children. It is particularly distressing that the use of restraint and seclusion disproportionately impacts children with an identified special education eligible disability and children who are male and African American or Latino.

The unproven practice of restraint and seclusion unnecessarily exposes our children to harm. The practice has not been shown to have therapeutic value as a behavioral intervention and there are evidence-based alternative strategies that have been proven effective. Adopting these strategies, as have states such as Massachusetts and Ohio, can significantly reduce the use of restraint and seclusion and decrease the physical injury and traumatic impact on children, families and educational personnel.

AFCAMP urges you to act favorably on Raised Bill No. 927.

Respectfully submitted.