



CAPSEF Founded in 1974

Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities

Member of the National Association of Private Special Education Centers and the Council of Affiliated State Associations

Testimony of the Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities

Raised Bill No. 1060

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION IN SCHOOLS

On behalf of the Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities, I am here today to express concerns about specific elements in Raised Bill No. 1060 that address the maximum length of time that a student can be in a restraint or seclusion based on the student's age.

It is the position of the CAPSEF membership that the parameters around the length of time a student is involved in a restraint or seclusion should be based on consistent monitoring and assessment of the student's imminent risk of injury to self or others, as opposed to an arbitrary time limit based on the student's age. Assessment-based decision making with regard to the length of a restraint or seclusion episode is consistent with the best practice approach endorsed and required by the Joint Commission's national standards for behavioral health care, as well as other national accreditation organizations. Requiring school staff to disengage from a restraint or open a seclusion room door solely predicated on a predetermined time limit based on their age may pose serious risk of injury to the student who is demonstrating unsafe behavior, school staff and other students.

CAPSEF's membership recommend that the legislation be amended to require that either a building administrator or a master's or doctoral prepared clinically trained school staff is called if a restraint or seclusion lasts more than 15 minutes with the intent for them to assess the student's current level of risk of injury to self or others based on their direct observation and assessment of the student in the restraint or seclusion room. If risk of injury to self or others in low, the administrator or clinically trained school staff will instruct school personnel to end the emergency safety procedure; if not, they will remain present until the student is considered safe based on their direct observation or until emergency first responders arrive and assume control of the situation.

In closing, the collective experience of our membership agrees that the current legislation will create a higher level of risk for school personnel, other students and students who are demonstrating unsafe behavior in school. The changes to this legislation recommended by the CAPSEF membership will help to ensure the safety of everyone in Connecticut's schools, establish nationally recognized best practice standards and ensure that students whose behavior becomes unsafe are only restrained or secluded for the length of time needed to help them regain safe behavior.

Thank you.
Patricia Gerrity,
CAPSEF President

