



**TESTIMONY OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY
IN SUPPORT OF RAISED S.B. NO. 183, WITH PROPOSED AMENDED LANGUAGE:**

An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education
Education Committee
February 26, 2018

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), a public-interest law firm representing Connecticut's most vulnerable youth. We urge you to pass S.B. 183, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education, with proposed amended language. This bill would help support the efforts to reduce the use of restraint and seclusion for children in schools.

Justin, a 6-year-old CCA client with mental health issues, had been secluded for almost 2000 minutes over the past 1.5 years. He is now being treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms due to the trauma he has experienced by being secluded over 50 times.

Unfortunately, this scenario is still far too common in Connecticut schools. According to the Office of the Child Advocate's February 2015 investigative report, more than 30,000 incidents of seclusion and restraint occur each year, affecting approximately 3000 students. This report also found that many of these students' educational needs are not being adequately met, which may lead to emotional dysregulation. Finally, the students who are restrained or secluded are disproportionately children with disabilities and children of color. This is a discriminatory practice that must be curbed for *all* children.

S.B. 183 removes seclusion as a planned intervention in a student's treatment of educational plan (or "IEP," Individualized Education Program). Justin's parents had felt they had no other choice than to allow the school to write seclusion into his IEP, due to the strong recommendations of staff. They did not realize that they could refuse to allow this practice to continue. When they finally learned about their legal right to do so, Justin had already been traumatized by 1.5 years of repeated seclusions.

CCA also endorses the proposed amended language offered by the Office of the Child Advocate, which is attached to their testimony. That language will:

- Add clarification to the distinction between an exclusionary time-out and seclusion
- Ensure continuous monitoring of a child in seclusion
- Ensure consistency in the proposed language regarding the elimination of planned seclusion from a child's IEP.

Please support the passage of S.B. 183, an act that will protect Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

Respectfully submitted,

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