



February 12, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin, Chairman
Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

On behalf of National PTA's more than four million members, I write to thank you for your introduction of the Keeping All Students Safe Act to address the issue of restraint and seclusion in schools. National PTA applauds your commitment to improving conditions so that students are able to learn in a safe and positive environment.

As the nation's oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy organization, National PTA has long advocated for the health and safety of all children. PTA believes that the safety of children in school settings is a fundamental right. We promote disciplinary interventions and supports that emphasize the positive behavior of students and include a family engagement component. PTA opposes the use of abusive discipline practices, including physical restraint and seclusion, which can have lasting consequences on the physical and emotional health of children.

Research shows that the use of seclusion and restraint continues to be widespread in the United States despite overwhelming evidence that other interventions are both safer and more effective. Additionally, studies show that many states do not require parental notification when seclusion and restraint has been used and that parents face obstacles when they try to address their concerns about the use of these practices in schools.

PTA recommends evidence-based alternatives to seclusion and restraint, including positive behavioral intervention, that when implemented demonstrate success at improving student behavior. We also recommend the continued engagement of parents through regular parent-teacher communication to address student behavior. Finally, we encourage parent participation in the development and review of school and district disciplinary policies and practices to help create safe and supportive school settings.

We are therefore pleased by the Keeping All Students Safe Act's attempt to prevent and reduce these harmful practices by establishing minimum safety standards that prohibit their use except in cases of emergency and require parental notification when they are used. We also strongly support



this legislation's promotion of evidence-based positive behavioral interventions and supports as an alternative to the use of physical restraint and seclusion.

National PTA thanks you for your leadership and dedication to protecting children from being subject to harmful discipline practices in schools. We look forward to working with you to ensure that every child is guaranteed a safe learning environment. If we can be of assistance, please contact Jessica Seitz, Education Policy Analyst, at jseitz@pta.org or (703) 518-1249.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Otha E. Thornton, Jr.".

Otha E. Thornton, Jr.
President
National PTA