



November 18, 2019

Senator Olsen
Chair, Senate Committee on Education
Wisconsin State Capitol, Rm 122S
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Olsen and Committee members:

The Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD) supports SB 527. This bill makes important common-sense changes to Wisconsin's existing law that ensure parents are notified quickly when seclusion and restraint is used, prohibits dangerous practices that can injure or even kill students, re-orient training to emphasize using de-escalation techniques first, and improves reporting requirements when incidents of seclusion and restraint occur.

Over the past three years, 20,000 incidents of seclusion and restraint occurred in Wisconsin schools. 80% of students involved in these incidents are students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities can achieve and learn with their peers with the right instruction and supports^[1]. But this can only occur when students feel safe at school and are present in the classroom. Removing students from the classroom disrupts academic learning. Use of restraint can be traumatic for children and can result in the student associating school with fear, pain, isolation, or injury. Neither is conducive to learning or quality education outcomes.

Many parents have described students whose attitude towards school have abruptly shifted and become negative or observed sudden shifts in behavior when discussing or going to school. Frequently, these behavior and attitude changes are the result of negative experiences at school, including seclusion and restraint.

Parents report discovering incidents of seclusion and restraint occurred after the fact and having trouble learning details about what happened. In many cases the content of the written incident report and the perception of the student may be very different and can lead to ongoing and escalating conflict and mistrust.

SB 527 provides greater transparency for parents to know when seclusion and restraint has been used on their child, clarity for districts on what must be reported, and better statewide data on use of these practices.

BPDD is charged under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act with advocacy, capacity building, and systems change to improve self-determination, independence, productivity, and

^[1] Research clearly shows that 99% of students – including those with disabilities -- can learn grade-level content in the general education curriculum and achieve proficiency on grade level standards with the appropriate supports.

integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for people with developmental disabilities (more about BPDD https://wi-bpdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Legislative_Overview_BPDD.pdf) .

Our role is to seek continuous improvement across all systems—education, transportation, health care, employment, etc.—that touch the lives of people with disabilities. Our work requires us to have a long-term vision of public policy that not only sees current systems as they are, but how these systems could be made better for current and future generations of people with disabilities.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Swedeen".

Beth Swedeen, Executive Director
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities