



Wisconsin Family Ties

Testimony in support of SB-527, Improvements to the Restraint & Seclusion Law

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Senate Bill 527 is the culmination of dozens of hours of constructive meetings between education stakeholders, including families, advocates, the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Special Services (WCASS), the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA), and the Department of Public Instruction.

The bill before you today primarily consists of technical changes based on data collected since the current state law on the use of restraint and/or seclusion in public schools went into effect in 2012. SB-527 provides much-needed clarity on what does and does not constitute an incident of restraint or seclusion, when such incidents need to be reported, how they need to be reported, and to whom reports should be sent.

The bill also requires that principals and staff involved in such incidents meet for debriefing. The research on restraint is clear: The moment these techniques are used, the likelihood of injuries to staff and children rises significantly. Debriefing is recognized as an effective tool to prevent future incidents of restraint and/or seclusion.

Finally, SB-527 increases the emphasis of training requirements on de-escalation. The data collected and analyzed by Wisconsin Family Ties and Disability Rights Wisconsin show that the number of incidents of restraint or seclusion remained static over a three-year period, at approximately 20,000 per year, and were disproportionately applied to elementary students with disabilities. All of the aforementioned stakeholders were unified in their belief that we can and should find and adopt better ways to meet the behavioral needs of these vulnerable students. The clarifying changes in SB-527 will help school staff, administrators, and educational stakeholders do just that.

Wisconsin Family Ties strongly supports SB-527, and urges its passage in this committee and the full Senate.

Wisconsin's family voice for children's mental health

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