

For Immediate Release

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## **Disability Rights Wisconsin Applauds Senate for Approving the Common Sense Changes to the Seclusion and Restraint Law**

Madison, WI- Disability Rights Wisconsin thanks the Senate for passing the common-sense changes to the seclusion and restraint law in SB 527. We especially thank Senator Olsen for his leadership in authoring the changes to this law, and all the time and effort over the last five years from his office.

In February 2016, Wisconsin Family Ties (WFT), Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW), and WI FACETS produced a report called *Miles to Go* detailing the distressingly high data on restraint and seclusion since the enactment of Act 125 in 2012. Restraint and seclusion were used over 20,000 times statewide in 2013/14; nearly 80% of the students involved were students with disabilities. The report contained several recommendations to the original law passed in 2011 to better protect students with disabilities in our public schools.

Lea Kitz, Executive Director at DRW, said. "Disability Rights Wisconsin offered several recommendations for how to improve state statute to reduce inappropriate use of these practices. We are pleased that these changes, incorporating years of work by a substantial group of education and disability stakeholders, are included in the bill passed today in the Senate."

SB 527 includes these and other essential changes: restraint and seclusion data required to be reported to DPI as well as school boards; require schools to convey a written incident report to parents; require that the principal meet with the staff who participated in the incident to discuss the sequence of events and strategies to prevent future incidents; and explicitly prohibit prone restraint. These changes increase the likelihood of reducing these practices and creating greater transparency for families.

"We saw an opportunity to improve on the original law, which begins with annual reporting requirements to the Department of Public Instruction. Paramount to our work was the change to incident reporting that requires the school district to give every written report to the family. Many families who contact us on seclusion and restraint do not receive a report, and now it would be required." said Phyllis Greenberger, Lead Advocacy Specialist.

DRW looks forward to the assembly bill AB 585 moving quickly out of the Assembly Education Committee this Thursday and being voted on in the Assembly before the end of the session.

*Disability Rights Wisconsin is the federally mandated Protection and Advocacy agency for the State of Wisconsin.*

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