

Tricia Tanner
Meeting Date: 4/17/2017
HB 3266

Chair Representative Jeff Barker, members of the House Committee on Judiciary, my name is Tricia Tanner and I represent the mom of a special needs kiddo that needs and wants those seclusion rooms. With that being said, I oppose House Bill 3266.

My eldest son Cameron is 12 years old. He's funny, smart, and quirky, loves Minecraft, started racing Bicycle Motocross (BMX) at age 4 and then flipped to motocross at age 6 and now he clears 70 foot long table tops on his motorcycle. Unfortunately, Cameron is also diagnosed Bipolar 1 Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Combined Type, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, and Autism Level 2 (more accurately Asperger's disorder). One minute Cam can be the sweetest, most loving child, but the next minute he can be the angriest and most destructive child you would ever meet.

My husband and I weren't able to get Cam diagnosed until he was 6 years old due to doctors and other professionals telling me that it was our parenting and that we needed to take parenting classes. We were also told that we needed to discipline him more, take everything away from him, including his racing (which is the only situation that he's "normal" at), or whoop his bottom more. When we were finally able to get him diagnosed, everything made sense but we still had to fight for services.

Cameron is enrolled in an emotional growth program or EGC at Crossler Middle School in South Salem. School has always been the hardest for him to do due to the structure and continuous sitting/listening. His behavior has had him suspended at least 1 time a year since he was in pre-3. He currently has an aid and is partially mainstreamed but attends social skills classes for 2 periods a day. We have learned that if we can catch his meltdowns in time (or even not in time); a seclusion room is the safest place for him to be. It protects him from himself, protects the staff from the violence that can occur, and protects his fellow classmates from the violence that can occur on them. Cam has thrown chairs, punched, kicked, and flipped over conference room tables in his fight or flight mode. He has also eloped from multiple schools. Elopement scares me the most. When Cam won't voluntarily relocate to the quiet room or seclusion room, Salem Keizer School District will use the Mandt restraint method. It's not the best method for restraint but it's what Salem Keizer has decided to use. Cameron wants to be safe, so if that means physical restraint, then that's what is needed.

When Cameron is in a seclusion room, alone, with the door shut, and no staff in the room with him (but still outside to monitor), I know my son is safe, secure, and will calm down fast without endangering himself, the staff, or other students. When my son is forced to be in a room with other staff, the staff members elevate his mood to a full blown, out of control meltdown where he will then need to be transferred to the seclusion rooms at Salem Hospital and locked down until he calms down. Have you ever seen your child so out of control that he is scared of himself? I have and it makes me cry every time. Cameron has told me that he prefers to have the seclusion room with no one in there so he can calm himself and he is getting better at it as he gets older.

If seclusion rooms are used right by trained professionals, they are a good tool for special needs kiddos to help them learn how to self-manage their emotions. Professionals need to be trained to be able to watch for the signs or triggers that signal an upcoming meltdown. For my son, it's during school with a subject that he struggles with, like reading where even though he's in 6th grade, he only reads at a 3rd grade level. High change over or not enough staffing due to funding issues within the special education unit are problematic and can cause meltdowns in students.

At times, physical restraint and seclusion is necessary. Chemical restraint should only be done by a physician and only with the parent/guardians approval. Mechanical restraint should never be done on school grounds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.



Picture: Cameron Tanner age 12, credit Tricia Tanner