



Mission: Empower Oregon families experiencing disability in their pursuit of a whole life by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families.

February 1, 2023

Chair Gelser Blouin

Vice-Chair Robinson

Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services

RE: support SB 790 - Modifies definition of "abuse" for purposes of child abuse to include violations of existing laws prohibiting infliction of corporal punishment on students and use of restraint and seclusion on students.

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Robinson, and members of the Committee,

FACT Oregon is a family-led nonprofit that works toward a future where communities are accessible to, inclusive of, and empower the self-determination of, people with disabilities. We support families, youth with disabilities, and partners to hold high expectations and set positive trajectory, navigate special education and disability systems and services, and advocate for the supports needed for youth to thrive at home, in school, and in community. Peer-delivered services include a Support Line, training, resources, technical assistance, and community engagement. Since 2012-13, we have served as the state and federally designated Parent Training and Information Center for special education.

The safety of children must be the priority of all systems within the state, and the ability to investigate injuries to children, wherever they occur, must be assured. Currently, investigation by the Office of Training, Investigations, and Safety involving children with disabilities injured at school through unlawful restraint, seclusion, or corporal punishment is thwarted by the fact that specific language around these practices is absent from the abuse definition. Families feel districts are not held accountable as their child's injury becomes secondary to the process of determining who has the authority to investigate the incident in the first place. In the last year alone, FACT Oregon supported over 500 unique families with concerns about restraint and seclusion, often resulting in injury to children with significant disabilities. Families are exasperated that they are not able to get adequate answers about these incidents and share a feeling of abandonment by the very system entrusted to protect their children.

Ensuring that the abuse definition includes corporal punishment and restraint/seclusion of students allows the ability of appropriate investigations to occur, thus ensuring the safety and protection of some of our most vulnerable students.

Thank you for considering this testimony. ***We urge you to support SB 790.***

Christy Reese, Executive Director
FACT Oregon