

Dear Chair, Vice-Chairs, and Members of the House Committee On Early Childhood and Human Services,

My name is Erika Torralba, and I am submitting written testimony in **opposition to HB 4059**.

This bill creates significant risk for children and young adults with disabilities or complex communication needs by narrowing the definition of “threatened harm” and delaying intervention until harm is considered imminent. Prevention works only when adults are allowed to act early – not after damage has already been done.

Abuse does not happen overnight, and it is not limited to physical injury. Children are harmed every day through psychological abuse by adults in positions of authority and trust. This can include public humiliation, shaming, unnecessary or punitive restraint, and isolation from peers. These experiences do not simply pass – they become lasting trauma that affects a child’s mental health, education, sense of safety and belonging.

By changing the definition of “threatened harm,” HB 4059 risks allowing serious psychological and emotional abuse to go unrecognized and unaddressed until it escalates. Children with disabilities are especially vulnerable, as they may have difficulty reporting mistreatment or being believed when they do.

Please do not pass HB 4059. Weakening prevention standards does not protect children – it increases the likelihood that harm will occur before anyone is able to step in.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Erika Torralba