

Submitter: Jeni Canaday
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4042

Senator Gelsner Blouin and members of the committee,

My name is Jeni Canaday and I am a Disability Rights Advocate. I urge you to please vote no on HB4042. The state should not be pursuing congregate care; this is a dangerous door to begin with, and to open even wider would be a serious mistake. The legislature shouldn't facilitate it other than as the very last resort when it is the only place a child can get the humane treatment that they need in a safe environment. One that doesn't use archaic behaviorist techniques that are known to cause more trauma.

Also, I understand that the Department requires some flexibility regarding licensing due to bureaucratic issues like the submission of financial documents referenced in the bill, but it is not ok to loosen requirements around whether providers should lose their license when a child dies in care or there is harm that the care agency knew about. That is preposterous and it does not protect vulnerable children.

And finally, the state should never make it easier to restrain children while in care. We should not be changing the statute to permit agencies to train staff on methods of restraint that we know are cruel and inappropriate. This is not the answer, and it ends up causing more harm and perpetuating the problem. We need to be focusing on training staff about co-regulation and how to manage their nervous systems so they can be the calm that children need when they are escalated. We need to train on how to support the sensitive sensory systems of traumatized children instead of training people how to further traumatize them by putting their hands on them when they need to feel safe. Training staff on collaborative problem solving can prevent the power struggles that unnecessarily lead to more intense escalations and has been proven effective in reducing restraint and seclusion in settings around the state and country. These strategies saved my son's life after years of restraint and seclusion proved ineffective and only made things worse. Please think of the vulnerable children and vote no. Thank you.