



Sen. Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Committee on Health Education
Labor and Pensions
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: KEEPING ALL STUDENTS SAFE ACT

DATE: DECEMBER 21, 2011

Dear Senator Harkin,

On behalf of the undersigned member organizations of APRAIS (the Alliance for the Prevention of Restraint, Aversive Interventions and Seclusion) I am writing to thank you for your strong leadership to prevent harmful, dangerous and abusive practices in the nation's public schools as demonstrated by the introduction of the Keeping All Students Safe Act, S. 2020. This bill represents a culmination of years of advocacy against abusive behavioral interventions that dehumanize and harm students. The time to pass this bill is now – we can no longer endure harm to vulnerable children as a result of abusive practices when decades of research equip education professionals with positive, safe and effective alternatives.

The lack of protections for all students limiting the use of aversive behavioral strategies, restraint and seclusion has proven to be a disastrous missing component of our national education policy for children and parents. If passed, S. 2020 will align federal education policy *with all other federal policy related to human services* and for the nation's youngest, most vulnerable citizens. Two major strengths of this legislation are that it articulates an expectation by Congress that schools emphasize PREVENTION of the need for emergency behavior interventions by establishing practices that are evidence based, and it establishes federal protections against the use of those practices proven to be the most dangerous, such as life-threatening restraints that inhibit breathing, seclusion, and mechanical and chemical restraints. There are many strong components of the bill, and we are especially encouraged by the restriction of the use of restraint to emergency situations when there is an imminent threat of bodily injury, the prohibition of including a plan for restraint use in a student's IEP, the required 24 hour parental notification, a required debriefing process, the emphasis on the use of Functional Behavior

Assessments and Behavioral Intervention Plans with fidelity, and the requirements for personnel training and data collection. These steps and others called for in the bill have been proven to protect children and adults in other settings, and will provide the desired protections for students in school.

APRAIS was founded in 2004 with a mission to prevent the use of restraint, seclusion and other aversive interventions that deny people their humanity and rob them of their dignity. Thank you again for introducing strong legislation to prevent these harmful practices. We stand ready to assist in enacting legislation that fully protects each student's right to be safe at school.

Signed,

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Autism Society
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Families Against Restraint and Seclusion
Family Alliance to Stop Abuse and Neglect
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Autism Association
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Fragile X Foundation
RespectAbility Law Center
TASH