

The Honorable Lynn Gattis, Chair
House Education Committee
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 420
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Gattis,

Support the Safe Students Act, HB 210

My husband was called to school to witness a 250 pound principal lying on top of our 9 year old daughter, who was crying and screaming, "Get off of me, I can't breathe, you're breaking my arm."

This is not Education!

I am a parent of a child who was restrained multiple times in grades 1-8. My daughter experiences prenatal exposure to alcohol and is one of the few in rural areas to have received a diagnosis.

My daughter experienced high anxiety in school. She would self- accommodate by hiding under her desk or removing herself from the classroom situation which caused visual/ verbal overload.

Unfortunately, the teacher's reaction to this 'non- compliance' was usually to closer to her face, use more words and talk louder. Far from encouraging 'compliance', this caused increased anxiety and my daughter would attempt to leave the classroom.

When prevented from self- accommodating, i.e., boxed in a corner; my daughter would act out physically. Additionally harmful- staff restraining was untrained, non- certified and multiple. We had reports of two adults carrying my daughter down the hall held by arms and legs towards seclusion.

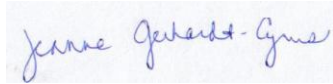
My daughter was subsequently diagnosed with PTSD.

This year, my daughter is on the honor roll as a freshman in high school. We are working with the Complex Behavioral Collaborative and the teachers allow her to self- accommodate. Her anxiety is much reduced and she is able to excel in school. Between her efforts, those of the CBC, staff, and parents in collaboration, everyone is safer, and she is reaching towards her potential.

This is Education!

Our students AND staff need training in approved de-escalation techniques. Inappropriate and unnecessary restraint and seclusion needs to stop. The physical and psychological damage is too high a price to pay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus". The signature is written in a cursive style and is located on a light blue rectangular background.

Jeanne Gerhardt- Cyrus, Parent

Kiana, Alaska