

ASK CONGRESS: VOTE FOR HR 4247, THE PREVENTING HARMFUL RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION IN SCHOOLS ACT!!

This week, the House of Representatives will vote on the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act (HR 4247). CALL YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE THIS WEEK (MONDAY AND TUESDAY ARE BEST) AND ASK THEM TO VOTE FOR THE BILL. Dial 202-224-3121 (TTY 202-225-1904) and ask for your Representative's office. See instructions below. Get your friends and family to call, too!

WHY SUPPORT HR 4247? IT IS AN IMPORTANT BILL THAT WILL PREVENT SCHOOLS FROM USING ABUSIVE TACTICS ON SCHOOL CHILDREN.

The Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act (HR 4247) is a bill that will stop schools from restraining children, confining them in seclusion rooms, and using aversive interventions to harm them. A Government Accountability Office study found hundreds of cases of alleged abuse and death from restraint and seclusion in public and private schools over the last two decades. Examples included a 7 year old who died after being held face down for hours by school staff; 5 year olds allegedly being tied to chairs with bungee cords and duct tape by their teacher and suffering broken arms and bloody noses; and a 13 year old who hanged himself in a seclusion room after prolonged confinement. The majority of students in the GAO study had disabilities.

HR 4247 will create a minimum level of protection for schoolchildren that all states must meet or exceed. Currently, 23 states have laws with weak or no protections. HR 4247 will prohibit restraint and locked seclusion of schoolchildren unless there is an imminent risk of physical injury that less restrictive interventions would not stop. It will forbid using these abusive techniques as punishment and behavior modification, and to deal with educational disruption and the like. Positive behavioral interventions are the appropriate ways to deal with disruptive behavior. HR 4247 is designed to encourage schools to use positive interventions and de-escalation, instead of abusive tactics. The bill prohibits schools from using mechanical and chemical restraints or restraints that impede breathing. Schools must notify parents within 24 hours if their child is restrained or secluded; schools will not be able to hide abuse any more. The bill bans aversives that hurt health and safety, such as using electric shock, forcing foul substances into the mouth, eyes, or nose of children, denying them food, water and access to the bathroom; and similar actions designed to cause severe pain and trauma.

HR 4247 will protect all students, whether in private or public school. Many children with disabilities are placed in private schools by school districts and they should not lose vital health and safety protections. Other parents choose to send their children to private school for religious or other reasons; they should not be forced to give up protections from abuse. When you call, please ask your Representative to vote against any amendment to exclude private schools from the bill.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CALLING CONGRESS ON MONDAY OR TUESDAY:

Call and ask your Representative to VOTE FOR H.R. 4247, the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act. Tell your Representative to vote against any amendment that would weaken the bill. If you are unable to call due to disability or other reason, send an email on Monday morning. Calls are very important, though. They immediately show that voters want action. When you call or write, be sure to include the bill's name, "The Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act," and its number (H.R. 4247). Also be sure to include your city or town, so they know you are a constituent. The House of Representatives will vote on the bill this week, so its important to call early in the week.

Telephone/TTY: Call your Congressional Representative and Senators at 202-224-3121 (TTY 202-225-1904). This is the switchboard, so you will need to know your Representative's name. When you are connected, ask for the aide who handles education or disability. If you get voicemail, please leave a message. If you cannot reach this aide, tell the person answering the phone that you want the Congressional Representative to vote for the bill. Again, tell them your city or town so they know they represent you.

You can also **find local numbers** and direct dial numbers on your Representative's webpage at <http://www.house.gov>.

Email: If you can call, it is very important to do so. But if you cannot (due to a disability, inability to use the phone during working hours, etc.), send an email on Monday. Go to <http://www.house.gov/writerep> for the House of Representatives.

Find Out Who Your Congressional Representative is: If you do not know who your Congressional Representative is, go to <http://www.house.gov> and put your zip code into the box in the upper left corner. (You usually only need your five digit zip code.)

If you have already contacted Congress about this bill, please do it again. Ask your Representative to VOTE FOR HR4247, the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act.

For more information about the dangers of restraint and seclusion and H.R. 4247, see <http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2009/12/preventing-harmful-restraint-a.shtml> and <http://edlabor.house.gov/blog/2010/02/myth-vs-fact-preventing-harmfu.shtml>