



American Federation  
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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AFT Teachers  
AFT PSRP  
AFT Higher Education  
AFT Public Employees  
AFT Healthcare

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February 4, 2010

The Honorable George Miller  
Chairman  
Committee on Education and Labor  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), I write to offer our views on the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act (H.R. 4247).

The legislation, introduced by you and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-Wash.), represents the first national effort aimed at remedying the misuse of restraint and seclusion practices in our schools. It also would establish standards around the use of restraint and seclusion in schools, provide resources for staff training to support the use of safe and effective practices, and improve data collection in this area.

H.R. 4247 represents a good first step toward helping to identify situations in which restraint and seclusion are used inappropriately. The legislation also seeks to provide a safe learning environment for students, school employees and staff, while maintaining flexibility in discipline procedures. The AFT is committed to working with Congress and other stakeholders to expand on elements of the bill that will:

- Prevent and reduce inappropriate restraint and seclusion by establishing minimum safety standards in schools;
- Require states to meet their responsibility to keep staff and children safe;
- Ask states to fund programs aimed at quality training and support to better protect students and staff; and
- Increase transparency and oversight to prevent future abuse.

As the process moves forward, we look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure that the final bill also will:

- Allow for parents and school personnel to discuss and plan for the possible use of physical restraints for individual students in emergency situations, where such restraint is needed to protect the student and personnel;
- Promote identification and training of appropriate personnel, including classroom personnel who work with students who have very challenging behavior problems;

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- Identify individual students for whom certain restraints should not be used because of specific health or emotional conditions;
- Minimize duplicative data collection and paperwork; and
- Respect the existing roles and responsibilities of state and local authorities.

We look forward to working with you on H.R. 4247 in the coming weeks. Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KWC', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristor W. Cowan  
Director, Legislation Department

KWC:emc opeiu#2 afl-cio