

HB 1318 Testimony
House Education Committee
Representative Mark Owens, Chairman
January 19, 2021

Chairman Owens and members of the committee, my name is Brady Burkes. I was born and raised in Grand Forks, North Dakota. When I was 3 years old when I started with the lifelong struggle of dealing with mental health problems. Throughout my life I have been diagnosed with my mom calls, “alphabet soup.” I have been given many labels and diagnoses over my 27 years, such as ADD, ADHD, OCD, Depression/Anxiety disorder, intermittent explosive disorder, emotional/behavioral disorder, and the list could go on.

I tell you the list of disorders I have been plagued with; in order to explain what my life was like as a child and the difficulties I faced in the public school system. I lived through the worst times of my life in the public school system and most of it was due to the use of seclusion and restraint that I was subjected to on a daily basis. I am writing this to let you know that I strongly oppose the use of seclusion and restraint in the classroom and throughout the public school system. Let me share with you, one day of my life as a child in the public school system.

When I was 7 years old, I remember arriving at school and the teachers would automatically assume what my mood was or what I was thinking based on my expression and body language, which often did not match what was going on in my mind. If I was quiet, they thought I was in a bad mood. When they would question me about being in a bad mood, I wouldn’t reply and they would keep asking me, which did provoke me to become upset. Then I would be threatened with the “quiet room,” (which was a small room within the classroom, that was wall to wall carpeting, and nothing else) instead of letting me have control of my emotions, the way my mom had told them to do. She knew my triggers and what would provoke me into a fit of rage. This would happen when I felt badgered and threatened. I would then become angry, kick desks, yell at other kids, and

teachers, which put me in the “quiet room,” This use of seclusion they justified by saying that the door did not have a lock on it and the child inside was safe. The truth of this was, an adult would stand at the door and hold it shut while I was fighting to get out. I felt like a caged animal in there and it only excelled my rage. I would kick, scream, fight to get out of that room until my body was exhausted and I crumbled on the floor and cried. I was confused, mad, sad, scared all at the same time. NO child should EVER be locked in a room like an animal. This only caused me to become untrusting of adults and scared that every emotion I had would result in the seclusion. When the seclusion didn’t achieve whatever goal it was they had, I would be restrained, so I would not run away from the school.

When you are trying to work with a child that has emotional disorders, the last thing that should be done is to seclude or restrain that child. What I want people to understand is the mind of the child. The anger overtakes the body, and the mind. By using force it only intensifies the turmoil the child is experiencing. I always “came out of the episode” confused, not really knowing what had just taken place, other then I was so sad and so scared. I lived this everyday of my life while I was in school. I trusted very few people and I lived in fear of being punished and misunderstood and to be locked up or held down in some terrible way. I strongly oppose the use of seclusion and restraint in the schools; it scars a child well into adulthood, and caused me to drop out of school when I turned 16. I was not able to continue dealing with the bias and hatred I felt around me.

Thank you for your time in listening to this brief opposition of the use of seclusion and restraint. I beg you to please do the right thing, protect the children; they are being abused everyday in our schools. Abuse that would have them removed from their homes, but seems to be acceptable in the public school system. Please support HB 1318.

Brady Burkes
Grand Forks, ND
Phone: (701) 317-3417
Email: kanetheeth_2011@hotmail.com