

Disability Rights Wisconsin: Applauds Assembly for passing common-sense changes to the seclusion and restraint law

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Madison, WI - Disability Rights Wisconsin applauds the full Assembly for passing SB 527

which makes common-sense changes to Wisconsin's seclusion and restraint law. We especially thank Representatives Quinn and Considine for their leadership in the Assembly on this bill.

In February 2016, Wisconsin Family Ties (WFT), Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW), and WI FACETS produced a report Miles to Go detailing the distressingly high data on restraint and seclusion since the enactment of Act 125 in 2012. Restraint and seclusion were used over 20,000 times statewide in 2013/14; nearly 80% of the students involved were students with disabilities. The report contained several recommendations to the original law to better protect students with disabilities in our public schools.

Lea Kitz, Executive Director at DRW, said. "Disability Rights Wisconsin is happy to see the improvement to the state statute to reduce inappropriate use of these practices. These changes incorporate years of work by a substantial group of education and disability stakeholders and will be on the way to the Governor's office for his signature."

SB 527 includes these and other essential changes: restraint and seclusion data required to be reported to DPI as well as school boards; schools required to convey a written incident report to parents; the principal required to meet with the staff who participated in the incident to discuss the sequence of events and strategies to prevent future incidents; and an explicit prohibition on prone restraint. These changes increase the likelihood of reducing these practices and creating greater transparency for families.

“The original law was a good start, but there was still a need for improvement. The most important change for families is the requirement to provide a written incident report.

Families who contact us regarding seclusion and restraint do not always receive these reports. With this bill it would be required.” said Phyllis Greenberger, Lead Advocacy Specialist.

DRW looks forward to Governor Ever’s signature on this bill, followed by the annual reporting requirements that will be implemented next year by the Department of Public Instruction.