



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

**Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 81
Education Committee
Tuesday, October 1, 2019**

Good morning, Chairwoman Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 81, which will prohibit the use of seclusion of students in public schools. This legislation will require the State Board of Education to update its policy and standards concerning seclusion; as well as, require each school district to comply with the updated policy and standards.

Seclusion means a procedure that does both of the following: (i) Isolates and confines a student in a separate area until the student is no longer an immediate danger to the student's self or others; (ii) Occurs in a specifically constructed or designated room or space that is physically isolated from common areas and from which the student is physically prevented from leaving.

Seclusion is a profoundly harmful practice, especially when used on children whose brains are still developing and whose developmental stages are always in flux. Multiple studies show that children who are secluded are more likely to commit suicide, attempt suicide, and engage in self-harming behaviors.

In the February 2015 Children's Defense Fund *Issue Brief*, it was reported that around 14,000 total incidents of seclusion or restraint occurred in Ohio schools during the 2013-2014 school year. Around 4,000 children accounted for these incidents, meaning that many students were secluded or restrained multiple times a year. The report also demonstrated that seclusion disproportionately affects students with disabilities and students of color. Such incidents occurred despite an Ohio State Board of Education policy prohibiting seclusion unless there is an immediate risk of harm to the student or others.

The purpose of this legislation is to ensure that our school districts are considering everyone's safety and well-being during difficult, highly intense times at school. This bill does not prohibit a behavioral intervention in which the student is temporarily removed from a learning activity; however, it does prohibit students being locked away, in a seemingly incarcerated, solitary manner.

Since the introduction of SB 81, numerous families across the state have reached out in support of banning seclusion practices with unthinkable personal stories. Chairwoman Lehner and members of the Committee, I appreciate your attention to this important issue and I respectfully request your favorable consideration and passage of Senate Bill 81. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.