

Corrine Hanlon

Parent

Newport, Rhode Island

The Bill #7729

My name is Corrine Hanlon; I am a parent of a boy who has autism and ADHD. My son is in the Newport public school district and he attended Pell elementary until I had him transferred to a school that is a better fit for him and his needs. I'm testifying in favor of bill 7729 which would support student mental health in the sense where special education children should have the same inclusion as everyone else, and not be isolated in a "safe room" which is really a punishment room and which my son had to endure.

While my son attended the Claiborne Pell Elementary school, he was excluded and put in the "safe room" for an extended period of time, 40 minutes to be exact... I was never shown this room, after asking time and time again I still don't know what my child fully endured in that room while attending the Pell School. This caused nightmares after nightmares in our home surrounding the safe room and how he had teachers grab his arm aggressively to put him into the excluded room. While he attended his old school, his teacher described him as "The loudest student in the room". This meant he spent most of his educational days in the "safe" room. The administration thought it would be in their best interest to only have my son who is 5 attend half day because of his behavior and since he was put on half days this means he was excluded from participating in PE, Art, STEM, Gardening, Math or STEAM classes like his peers. During these half days he spent most of his time in the "safe room" where he was instructed to stand in the back with his hands by his side and to be quiet the entire time until he put his hand up to get out. Someone with ADHD and autism cannot simply remember this or carry it out, let alone a 5-year-old child.

When he was moved to a specialized school, he didn't need these kinds of interventions because it was the right environment for him.

Providing public school districts, the correct education on how to handle students who have behavioral disabilities will ensure that no child is left in a "safe room" for 40 minutes again.

I urge this committee to favor Bill #7729 so that the use of seclusion rooms will be eliminated.