

Testimony in Opposition to HB 2243

By Tonia Wade



Hello Chairman Jennings and members of the Committee. My name is Tonia A. Wade. I am the parent of a beautiful 18-year-old young woman with a disability. My daughter Kaliya has profound Autism and attends school in Kansas City Kansas.

Last year I testified before several legislative committees sharing my concerns along with the experiences of my daughter. Several years ago Kaliya was forced against her will into a small, wooden box as a form of “seclusion.” It was a make-shift wooden box made with materials you can get from the Home Depot. Being forced into this small box against her will traumatized Kaliya greatly and caused our family undue stress. Kaliya still has deep emotional scars from that unnecessary and inappropriate use of seclusion and restraint. Kaliya has had to see a psychiatrist because of the pain being forced into that box.

Like many parents I sent my child to school thinking the school was protecting and educating my daughter. Nothing could be further from the truth. I sent my daughter to school whole and they sent her home broken.

Because of Kaliya’s severe impairment, the school was under the impression that they had gotten away with its horrendous offense. It took some time, but I was finally able to get to the bottom of this horrible act.

The school's "job description," if you will, is to educate and protect our children. **School "safety officers" are not law enforcement officers. They don't have the same training as law enforcement officers. Schools should not have an additional exemption under the law to be able to use mechanical restraint against school children. I trusted Kansas City Kansas schools with my Kaliya. They violated that trust. My story should underscore that schools cannot be trusted with another exemption to make it even easier to mechanically restrain Kansas schools.**

I share my personal testimony today and in prior years because I want to shine a light on abuse and neglect that I no longer want other parents to live again. I have to relive the trauma every time I provide testimony like this. However I am doing just that to protect other children and other parents.

Since the Kaliya was forced in the tiny box she has continually remained under the care of a psychiatric doctor. She has been on over 15 different medications, causing her body to endure the harmful side-effects of each drug. Thankfully, my prayers were answered last year. The special ESI Task Force has created standards in law regarding this dangerous practice.

Finally, even though I do not believe the ESI Task Force recommendations went quite far enough to protect students like my Kaliya from the deadly practices of seclusion and restraint, this was a compromise reached by the education lobbyists and disability

community. Respect should be granted to this historic compromise reached by the ESI Task Force.

I oppose HB 2243, and ask you to do the same. Thank you for reading my testimony.