

INTERFAITH DISABILITY ADVOCACY COALITION

c/o AAPD • 1629 K Street, NW • Washington, DC 20006

May 1, 2010

Dear Senator:

We, the undersigned members of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) and other religious and religiously-affiliated organizations, representing millions of Americans of faith, urge you to support the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act (S. 2860). If fully enacted, this legislation would provide students with and without disabilities vital protections against abuse in schools.

IDAC is a diverse, nonpartisan coalition whose mission is to mobilize the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the President and Administration, and society at large.

Last year, a Government Accountability Office study found hundreds of cases over the last two decades of alleged abuse and death from restraint and seclusion in public and private schools. A disproportionate number of these victims were students with disabilities. Currently, 23 states have laws with weak or no protections from the use of harmful aversive techniques.

The Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act has passed in the House with strong bipartisan support. It would establish comprehensive national standards as well as an effective enforcement mechanism to prevent the use of seclusion and restraint in schools and create a minimum level of protection for children that all states must meet or exceed. Finally, unlike previous attempts to protect students with disabilities, this legislation applies to all students and bans the worst practices, including mechanical restraint, chemical restraint and physical restraint.

As people of faith, our core spiritual values affirm the rights and dignity of children and adults with disabilities. We consider passage of this legislation—aimed at preventing victimization of students with disabilities—to be a moral imperative.

We urge you to support the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act (S. 2860).

Respectfully,

The mission of the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Coalition (IDAC) is to mobilize the religious community to speak out and take action on disability policy issues with Congress, the President and Administration, and society at large.