

Erin Sandsmark  
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Hello Madame Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Erin Sandsmark, and I am the Coalition Programs Manager for Solutions Not Suspensions. SNS is a coalition of students, families, community members, and organizations committed to changing policies, practices, and mindsets in order to end racial disparities in discipline and foster positive school climates for all students.

That is our mission, and that is why I am writing this to you today. I believe that HF 3489 will undo important wins and protections that were gained in the 2023 legislative session. I am deeply disappointed that the bill before us today, will grant the ability to SROs, security personnel, and other contracted officers, to use air restrictive holds on students in schools. This is shameful, and as members of the MN legislature, you should not take this lightly. I know that our community does not.

This bill strips away the wins for students we won last session, to protect our children from dangerous restraints by adults. In this new bill, SROs, security personnel, and other contracted officers will be held to a lower standard of care and accountability.

I have yet to hear a reason why you all think these types of air restrictive restraints are necessary for children, when other reasonable intervention by officers are allowed. Do you, as a lawmakers, not think that these holds will cause the potential for serious harm or danger to our students?

Why have the complaints by SROs and other security personnel been given more weight than the experiences of our children? Have enough young people been heard? I don't think so, or else I would not be sending this letter in today. Furthermore, we know that these prone and air restrictive holds are more likely to be used on Black, Brown, Indigenous, and disabled youth. We as a state have witnessed first hand what prone restraints can do, and what state sanctioned violence on Black bodies can do. George Floyd was murdered, while in a prone restraint. We will take a step backwards as a state if we re-open the door to allow these air restrictive holds in our schools.

Thank you.