

Erin Sandsmark  
Coalition Programs Manager  
Solutions Not Suspensions  
Opposition to HF3489

Dear Chair Moller 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 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 and other contracted officers, to use air restrictive holds on students in schools, like prone restraints.

We keep hearing to not worry, and that enough protections are in 609.06. We very much disagree. 609 is about chokeholds, we are talking about prone restraints. A prone restraint, with a body on the ground, being held down by adults, is a traumatic hold both psychologically, and physically. We have a student in our coalition that has experienced this hold first hand, when he was only in 5th grade. When he spoke about his experience in the last Education Policy Committee. It felt as if his story was largely ignored. One representative on the Education Policy committee went as far as to say, "Does this even happen in schools?" after his testimony. His experience was largely dismissed by that body. It is not the fault of our students that these incidents have gone unreported. It has been a failure of the state, until last spring it became required to report such incidents. I urge the Public Safety Committee to not so quickly dismiss these real incidents, and this student's story.

We must fix this bill, and protect our children from dangerous restraints by ALL adults. Sure, let's clarify the law, but that does not mean we have to play political games by taking out protections for our kids. Our students deserve more. We know that these prone and air restrictive holds are more likely to be used on Black, Brown, Indigenous, and disabled youth. We have to consider the implications of allowing these restraints by SROs.

All adults should be held to a high standard. SROs chose to leave school buildings this year, but the bill that was passed did not kick them out. It was merely trying to hold officers accountable. I urge you to reconsider the use of prone restraints. We must consider the needs of our children over the wants of our police.

Thank you.