

Written Testimony, Public Safety Policy/Finance Committee Feb 13th

In 2019 the US Department of Education ranked Minnesota the worst in the nation for racial disparities. The data for discipline in schools is similar, ranking MN the second worst state in the nation for racial and disability disparities for discipline in schools. So when we're looking at who is impacted most by dangerous holds and restraints, we know it's our Black, Brown, and Indigenous students, yet we haven't engaged these students or their families in the decision making around this legislature to reverse the chokehold ban. Instead, we are listening to special interest groups, like law enforcement. When I shared the possibility of the prone restraint ban being reversed with hundreds of MN students and families of color, they had no idea this was even going on. Often times when decisions are made in educational policy, it is a top-down approach and the ones farthest away from our MN classrooms are impacting decisions and creating policies, while those closest to the classrooms are left out of the discussions. And we wonder why MN is the worst state in the nation for racial disparities in education! Let's start listening and acting on what we learn!

According to the MN Dept of Human Rights, During the 2019 school year in Minnesota, 11% of enrolled students were Black, and 1.6% were American Indian. However, these students respectively represented 18% and 5% of students referred to law enforcement through the school discipline process. Multiple districts' quarterly discipline data, Advisory Council evaluations and recommendations, and Research conducted by education experts led to numerous recommendations that were published by the MN dept of Human Rights. As I read through these recommendations, I want you to note how this proposed legislation of reversing the chokehold ban goes against every single one of these recommendations:

1. Advance state policies that decrease race and disability discipline disparities
2. Focus on shifting adult behavior instead of targeting and sometimes criminalizing student behavior
3. Reduce the use of school resource officers when making discipline decision
4. Prioritize educator training that focuses on building capacities and skills such as social and emotional learning, positive behavior interventions and supports, anti-bias education, and non-exclusionary discipline
5. Develop, regularly review, and publish policies regarding the use of school resource officers based on best practices in school safety, social emotional learning, conflict resolution, discipline, use of force, and tactical de-escalation.
6. Regularly evaluate the implementation and impact of how and when school resource officers are used in responding to student behavior and discipline.
7. The state should advance a comprehensive package of legislation that supports more inclusive and welcoming school environments to intentionally decrease race and disability discipline disparities for Minnesota students
8. The state can continue to support its work to end disparities by working in collaboration with schools, educators, students, families, other agencies, community organizations, and national experts to develop effective guidance,

parameters, and frameworks for creating school climates that are inclusive and equitable.

**As you can see, this new legislation ignores all of this data and recommendations.

If that's not enough, The US Government accountability office found hundreds of cases of abuse and death related to the use of prone restraint. The US Department of education stated prone restraints or other restraints that restrict breathing should never be used because they can cause serious injury or death.

Instead of working towards reinstating policies and practices that harm our children and continue the racial disparities in our schools, we need to be investing time, energy, and funding into restorative practices, trauma informed schools, de-escalation tactics, anti-racist and implicit bias training, positive behavior supports, and culturally relevant and culturally sustaining education to support our students' needs and ensure that we are actually working toward healing versus harm and ending the disgraceful racial disparities in our schools.

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