

Re: HF 3402

Dear Chair Richardson,

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on HF 3402: Exclusion from recess prohibited as student discipline.

My name is Shayna Hamiel, and I live in Mora, MN with my husband and 2 children. I became interested in this issue a couple years ago when a friend of mine had their child held in during recess for saying a single word during a quiet class time without even being given the chance to explain themselves. After talking with more families in my district, I realized that it was happening fairly often with similar stories. While this has not happened individually to my 2nd grader, he has witnessed it happen to his friends, and his entire class has been held in for all or part of recess on multiple occasions for things such as talking in line or being too rowdy just before; things that recess itself would be a remedy for. My son is autistic, rule-focused, and very afraid of getting in trouble, and tells me how worried he gets that him or others will do something wrong and not get to go outside to play. Not only is withholding recess an inappropriate form of discipline, but now even just the threat of it has become punishment in itself, leading to undue anxiety for my son and I'm sure others as well.

When I discussed the issue with our school administrators, I was called an extremist for requesting that it not be an option and told that it was only being used as a last resort. After sharing multiple stories where I knew that to be untrue, it was clear to everyone in the room that administration was unaware of just how often it was happening and why. The only result of that meeting was that they would try to do a better job of tracking it. In a district with a very high poverty rate, this is especially concerning for the health of our children.

We all need to do better. Our kids deserve better. I was a pediatric nurse for 15 years and am now pursuing my doctorate in nursing to work in developmental pediatrics. I have a passion for supporting the development of our kids rather than hindering it with unrealistic expectations and inappropriate or harmful consequences. With the abundance of research now showing the importance of recess and the harms of withholding it as punishment, it worries me that we are still so far behind the times and that a person requesting we follow the developmental science is called an extremist. We have a lot of work to do to better equip our teachers to properly support their students, but not allowing the withholding of recess as punishment is a key piece to that.

I am asking you to support HF 3402 so that all kids have the equal opportunity to play, self-regulate, and have that active mental break, and so that my child can focus his attention on learning and breathe easier without the fear of losing that opportunity.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

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