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An affiliate of the National Education Association

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Testimony of

Jeff Leake

President, Connecticut Education Association

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 An Act Concerning Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate

I come before you today to talk about safety and learning in our classrooms. I am assuming that all of us students, educators, parents, and legislators, believe that all of our children, and the people who care for them during the day, should feel safe and secure while at school. I am also assuming that you really do want to know the realities that exist in too many of our classrooms.

So let me begin by saying that we do not know why there has been the uptick we have seen in extreme behaviors in our schools, nor do my colleagues across our country who are dealing with this same phenomenon. What we do know is that an increasing number of our colleagues are concerned that student needs are going unmet and that we are not able to provide the safety and security that we believe should be the norm in ALL of our classrooms. What we do know is that this crisis we are experiencing affects urban, suburban, and rural environments. What we do know is that we must address, not hide, from this real crisis in too many of our schools and classrooms.

And addressing, not hiding, from our current reality is exactly what HB 7110 does. It calls for all schools to have a plan for helping students who are exhibiting extreme behaviors, especially those who have been removed from the classroom. It calls for plans to begin to proactively lessen those extreme behaviors by providing increased student supports and teacher training, specifically addressing student mental health and social and emotional needs. It calls for strategies to enhance the general school climate, and yes, it calls for reporting – reporting not for disciplinary purposes, but to be certain that the plans adopted by our schools and districts are actually making a difference.

Another extremely important piece of this proposed legislation is the assurance of teacher input – input into the assistance and interventions necessary to support the affected students. The proposal also includes a prohibition against discrimination or retaliation against any individual who reports or assists in the investigation of a disruptive or injurious incident. It requires that a meeting be conducted with the affected teacher to discuss and determine the steps, supports, and interventions necessary to support both the student and the teacher. These pieces are key, as too many of our teachers have been pressured to not report or tell others of the incidents that are happening in their classrooms—leaving them to suffer in silence or submit their stories without identifying themselves. We have attached such testimony from nearly 100 teachers telling their compelling stories anonymously.

This legislation will help us to achieve the safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments that we know all of our communities expect as they send their children off to school. I urge this committee and both legislative bodies to understand that this is urgent – this trauma in our classrooms is serious and real. Another year of doing nothing is not acceptable. We have worked with others to fashion a legislative plan to positively and proactively address this crisis – let's do it, together.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have been a kindergarten teacher for the past 6 years. Four out of the last 6 years I have had 2-3 violent and disruptive students per year. These students have torn apart my entire classroom throwing chairs and baskets of books, knocking over tables, throwing water bottles through a plastic scoop chair, throwing pencils, scissors, staplers, and frankly anything they could get their hands on. I have had to evacuate my classroom on almost a daily basis for fear that the other students would be hurt. I have students who would bolt from the classroom and run towards the door, to the point that I would have to leave my class to chase them in fear that they would run outside. I have been punched in the face, kicked, punched, pinched, and slapped on numerous occasions. I have been attacked by flying book baskets, shoes, chairs and other objects, and because we are not allowed to stop a student there is nothing to do but watch the hundreds of dollars that I spend of MY OWN MONEY get trashed in a matter of minutes. My supplies are NOT reimbursed and I have had to replenish any ruined materials. The other awful tragedy of our current predicament in public education is the loss of instructional time due to outbursts and evacuations. Other students are being traumatized and there is an increase in anxiety behaviors including chewing on sleeves, not wanting to come to school, and other emotional outbursts in children that wouldn't normally be upset. Not to mention the emotional toll it has taken on me the teacher. I have gained a lot of weight, have an increase in my blood pressure, and anxiety. Something must be done for these children who are troubled, as well as for the teachers and the other students. The climate in education is grim and I don't see a lot of newer teachers staying for this kind of abuse.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I was punched in the face by a disruptive special needs student as I attempted to stop him from throwing a chair across my classroom. He took out his anger on me by swinging punches and one punch hit me in my jaw. This incident happened in front of my entire third grade class. After the incident, it escalated even more where this child then knocked over two desks. My entire class evacuated the room and headed into a nearby classroom for safety. These incidents are happening much too frequently and something needs to be done to protect teachers and their students. Thank you very much.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Schools across CT are in crisis. I speak with educators across the state that have similar experiences to me and the occurrences at my school.

I teach in a K-2 school where violent, emotionally dysregulated children with traumatic histories are in more and more classrooms. Currently in KINDERGARTEN, we have three highly dysregulated children out of seven classrooms. Some days I have traveled back to my classroom after dropping my students at lunch or special and have encountered two or three of these children having episodes at the same time - it is like walking through a war zone. It leaves me wondering...HOW IS THIS A SCHOOL????

I have had one of the three aforementioned children in my classroom this year. This child was well flagged by our town preschool, yet there was no formal plan for this child or for me at the onset of the school year. As a result, I taught my FOUR AND FIVE year olds to evacuate our classroom. We have done so over forty times.

This child has been violent, screamed profanities at his classmates, has spit in his classmates' food and faces, and has hit, kicked and pushed his classmates. He has broken/destroyed/attempted to destroy boxes of crayons, highlighters, magic markers, books, pocket charts, Smart Boards, headphones, rest mats, iPads, computers, windows, ceiling tiles, and much more.

This child has punched teachers, threatened them with scissors, kicked teachers, and yelled profanities at teachers and administrators. This has occurred day after day, ALL day, for over 100 days of school.

The beauty of teaching kindergarten is that children love one another at this age. They do not hold grudges. They do not judge. Our class loves this dysregulated child. They care for him. They try to make him feel better or make him happy.

This wonderful class has been exposed to FAR MORE than they should have this year... they have been exposed to traumatic episodes in their classroom. These children have flinched at their classmate, have run from him, have hid behind their teacher's back for safety, have watched their classmate - unable to look away out of fear, have had items taken from their hands, have watched him break classroom items, have pleaded with him to stop (stop screaming, stop blinking lights on & off, stop turning our Smart Board speaker up as loudly as it would go), have given up their turns so that he would not react, have given up being the Line Leader job to avoid his reaction, have let him go first in nearly every game or class discussion, they have given up their iPads for him to make him happy, they allow him to enter the classroom first to give him space, they have waited for adults to speak with their teacher WITH GREAT

FREQUENCY, they have evacuated their classrooms and have had instruction stopped and started. They have delivered notes to other teachers in the building to call the office for help. They have been asked to get help. They have been trapped in their classroom because their classmate has blocked their evacuation exit. They have covered their ears and their eyes in fear. They have been hurt and they have cried. Some have not wanted to come to school. Some have told their families that their teacher got hit. They have been exposed to secondary trauma... at ages four and five. In. Their. School.

They come to school and their families SEND them to school - a place that is a safe, in theory. A place where learning and having fun is the expectation! Their families do not know that they are evacuating an UNSAFE classroom. That they are experiencing a form of trauma when they see a student hitting adults and yelling profanities.

It is a lose - lose situation.

Every school needs to be equipped in 2019 with alternative classrooms for these dysregulated children. It is what is fair and right for them. These children do not have the tools to succeed in a regular-ed classroom. They need THERAPY, SPECIALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS, ONE SPECIALIZED TEACHER TO TWO OR THREE CHILDREN, THERAPY AND MORE THERAPY. They need the best team in their young lives to be able to have a promising future. It is a new role for schools, but is a CRITICAL ONE.

I hear more and more of my colleagues wanting to leave teaching. Teachers were not trained for combat. Teachers were not trained to teach violent children. Districts are placing more and more pressure on teacher evaluations and performance...how do teachers meet educational goals with violent students in our classrooms. Administrators take them out of the classroom and then RETURN THEM to the classrooms.

The risks are alarming for ALL involved...teachers, para-educators and ALL CHILDREN. Public education needs to respond IMMEDIATELY to this crisis.

As of Friday (107+days of school), my student was reassigned to another Kindergarten classroom because of parent complaints. I do not want this student out of my classroom. I do not want another class negatively impacted by this child. I do not want esteemed colleagues to experience what I have this year. I do not think it is best for this child. I do not want him penalized for his traumatic life - this feels like another form of trauma for him. I have worked tirelessly to help him make gains, to help him learn how to keep others safe in his classroom, to help him learn his letters, his numbers and how to read. I love him. I do not think this choice is the right one - I want a program for him. I want to help develop a successful program for him. I want to help administration build a successful alternative setting for children like my student. And I have been asking this for over 100 days.

I want hope.

I do not want to leave a profession I love. But what if next year is THE SAME??? And the year after that???

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am writing to ask for your support for HB7110 - An Act Concerning Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate. I am halfway through my 18th year of teaching in a close-knit community where education is both valued and respected. It saddens me to say that over the last 18 years, I have seen a major change in the behavior of our students. While many remain respectful and eager to learn, there is a growing population of students who are not in special education but are distancing themselves from the general population due to disruptive, often physical, behavior within the classroom. In some cases, student behavior escalates to the point of needing intervention from either the school psychologist, social worker or principal. These individuals are willing to help, but I feel that these situations are simply diffused and that there are neither appropriate interventions or consequences for student behaviors. We simply do not have the staff or resources to be proactively intervening in order to truly be a help. I am becoming increasingly concerned about the lessons we are NOT teaching this population of students and cannot help but wonder where they will be in a few years if they are not taught how to properly deal with their lack of coping skills. I have always loved my job and the relationships I have formed with students but it has crossed my mind more than once that remaining in the teaching profession until retirement may simply be something I am not willing to do. Disruptive students take a great deal of attention and other students who are interested in learning often miss out through no fault of their own. I believe that this bill includes the answer to moving forward in a positive way to address disruptive students within a classroom. Thank you for your attention.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

How can teachers effectively teach students while objects are being thrown at them? How can I teach 10 months worth of curriculum when I have students screaming and throwing themselves onto the ground requiring the class to evacuate the classroom? Classroom safety and disruptive behavior is a major problem that must be addressed. Students who are ready to learn are constantly put aside due to disruptive behavior and this needs to stop. Its time to take action to protect all school personnel and protect other students' education.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am a teacher with over twenty years experience in elementary classrooms. The incidents of disruptive and violent behaviors in school has risen dramatically within the last few years. I have experienced students throwing furniture and materials, running from the classroom and swearing and harassing teachers and students. I have been physically hit and had objects thrown at me in front of my other students. The other students in my class are fearful and anxious. If you were to ask them what my job is they would not answer "to teach us" they would instantly reply "to keep us safe". Unfortunately my story is not unique. Disruptive and aggressive behaviors are a daily experience for teachers and students. Students are often returned to the classroom after these incidents with little follow up with the teacher.

There is no common reporting procedure and therefore no consistent consequence or intervention for helping and addressing disruptive and violent student behaviors. I support any legislation that would address this issue and provide a safe and appropriate environment for all students and staff.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have been a teacher for the past 4 1/2 years. Within the past 2 years, I have seen an increase in violent student behaviors both towards one another, and towards staff, myself included. I have been shoved into walls so hard that I was left with bruises. I have had objects thrown at me, including classroom furniture. I have even been spit on. This increase in violence has been, in my observation, in direct correlation to a decrease in meaningful consequences for students.

To allow student violence to continue without consequences will only result in more injuries and more teachers leaving the profession. We already have tremendous pressure from standardized testing, increased student needs, and increased class sizes. When you add to that an environment where students are allowed to be violent, why would anyone want to stay?

Not only does this violence affect teachers and staff, but it also affects the other students in the room. School is a place where students feel safe. If they do not feel safe, as studies have shown, they will have difficulty learning. When the school environment is unpredictable and violent, students suffer. The students I teach all have a background that includes trauma. For many of them, seeing violence in the classroom is extremely difficult and often triggers them to have negative behaviors of their own, including self harm.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to pass legislation to protect our teachers and students. As both a teacher and a mother, I believe this to be the most important issue in education today. Thank you.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

As a special education teacher I have has been assaulted on numerous occasions throughout the past five years. I have had two surgeries as a result of two separate incidences of being assaulted by students. Despite my pleas for more support from administration and the Board Certified Behavior Analyst who is spread very thin (to no fault of her own) the lack of support in handling student behaviors remains a consistent issue. There are very few consequences for student misconduct. Understanding that some students who have disabilities are not held accountable for their behaviors due to their disabilities, there is a very weak support system to teach these students social skills and emotional regulation. There is a desperate need for BCBAs, support staff and administration to support these students and teachers.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I love children...I love teaching and giving them what they need to learn, grow, and believe in their abilities. I am saddened by the degree of behaviors, unrelated to teaching styles, that I see in classrooms-20 children wanting to learn...having to stop multiple times each hour to redirect 2 or 3 other children who cannot control their behaviors. Often times their parents forgot to give them their medication...one great teacher, no help, trying to teach while stopping repeatedly to intervene in situations which we are not qualified to even help with, trying to start over again and again to return to the lesson we prepared for...it is so unbelievably sad, that children have to experience this ... and their loving teachers, unsupported, are becoming ill from the stress.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

I have a student this year who is very disruptive in the classroom. He has called me vile names and vile comments, destroyed property and bulletin boards and thrown furniture and swears at me and other students. He has tried to hurt me and has threatened other students. He was removed from my class and put into the other grade level classroom, but since we switched classes he still comes to my class. For the first half of the last marking period he was with my homeroom and I was unable to teach in the classroom or have flex groups and small group meetings. The second half of the marking period he was in the other class but still coming to me and they suffered the same fate. This child was suspended from school over 20 days this year alone for threats, fights and being totally out of control. I am more concerned with the other children's learning process, for the first time in my teaching career, both classes didn't show any improvement from the assessment given at the beginning of the year to the midway point due to the inconsistency of teaching the strategies and skills due to the constant disruption in both classrooms. We, students and both grade teachers are afraid of him and at this point let him do whatever he wants - come to my class or not, just to try to keep peace in class. Just recently he got mad because he wouldn't get into line where he wanted to and took off, tearing down bulletin boards and slammed a Kindergartner into the wall just because he was in the hallway. This child's behavior is escalating towards a situation that will not end well. My admin is doing the best they can, but they do have to follow procedure and specific time line so their hands are tied - they do respond with security and consequences but that still isn't helping the climate in the classroom. I am extremely concerned with the safety of my students, my grade partner, and myself. I am afraid of this child and what he is capable of doing. It's hard for someone to actually understand what is going on -on a daily basis and the damage that is being done (not just physical but psychological) to all that are a part of this. Personally, I was in my admin's office mid-November telling them it's me or the child- if they couldn't do anything regarding the situation, I will write on a piece of paper two words and will be gone by the end of the day. I felt I was going to have a mental breakdown because of this child and his abusive words and actions. As I mentioned earlier he was removed from my homeroom, but he still came to my room twice a day for the subjects I teach. He continued with the abusive actions and was constantly sent to the office, but generally the next day was a repeat of the day before. Something needs to be done to protect both students and teachers from this level of violence in the classroom.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Hello, I have been a teacher for 20 years in CT. This year was the first time within that career that I have been assaulted. I was pushed by a first grade student who constantly disrupted my classroom since the second week of school. I had repeatedly told administration that I didn't feel safe. This male first grader, who is about 45" tall, pushed me into my classroom door. I suffered an injury to my vertebrae. This child's force slipped a disc in my back. I stayed out of work for 2 weeks, due to the pain and emotional toll it took on me. I struggled w workers comp, who stated it was an old injury, the district who blamed me for it happening and my administrator who didn't file the paperwork with central office until my union rep got involved. The admin said this students behavior was bc of me that when I was out, he was fine. They wanted me to return to the classroom to work w the student who assaulted me. Would I stay in an abusive relationship? Go back to the scene of an accident or crime? Yet, I was expected to face him daily for the next 130 days and not think that it could happen again. There weren't any witnesses, so they truly didn't believe me. The admin never thought to place this child in another classroom. Instead, I was offered a different position in the school where I have been treated like just any old substitute. The admin makes me feel as if what I'm doing doesn't matter. Parents of my former first graders can't even look me in the eye. They are mad at me bc I left their children. But they don't know why... two students were pulled out of that class since. I am not allowed to share my story bc we must protect the student who can't protect himself. One parent pulled her child out because the mom volunteered weekly and saw the mess the two behaviors caused on a second-by-second basis in my class. The other because the daughter was so devastated that I left. 6 out of 20 students are receiving reading support because work can't happen in this classroom! They are now on their third teacher in this classroom. Yet, continually I am led to believe it started with me and it is my fault. Something has to change to empower teachers.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Many of our students are in a crisis and, as a result, so are our schools. Teachers and classes of students are regularly disrupted from learning by students who are in crisis. As an adult, I realize that we need to support and help that student in crisis. However, that student in crisis is often violent and exposes their classmates to traumatic events through this violence. It is common for teachers and those who work with kids (I teach first graders) to be assaulted. I have been kicked in the chest, punched, and have had obscenities yelled at me—all in front of the other students as we were trying to get them to their "buddy class" for safety. We (teachers) have been told by administration that we "would get over it." While we are trying to help the student in crisis (who very likely is a child of trauma) we are creating a secondary environment of trauma for

the rest of the class. Students shouldn't be exposed to a classmate who essentially holds their learning hostage. Those other students are regularly exposed to the violence of a student in crisis and are being inadvertently taught that violence is normal and ok. Students and teachers should not be afraid of students. It's not just in upper grades. Sadly, it's happening in younger grades too. We need to have school systems, staff and programs available not only to help a student in crisis but also to keep teachers and the other students safe. We teachers deserve a work environment where we are not scared to be assaulted or that our students will be assaulted. We need ways to help students in crisis while also continuing to create a safe learning space for the other students. I have driven to school with tears in my eyes, not knowing if today will be the day that a student in crisis will erupt and not only hurt me but my other students. Our students are in crisis but so is our system. Help us by supporting us. We need systems and protocols in place to protect the teachers, which in turn, protects our students.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

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HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

In the past 5 years I have seen a great increase in violent behavior out of my students who are 5-8 yrs old. I used to see one or two children per class, now we only have one or two students that can self regulate. The others have varying degrees of violent behaviors. These regular ed students kick, scratch, bite, swear, bolt and destroy. On any given day, a classroom can be completely destroyed because of a students violent outburst. Administration documents, but does not punish, because students are little. I am afraid to teach these classes (I teach all k-2 student) as I am usually the only one in the classroom (no other adult support). No child should be exposed to this abusive behavior every day. It's not a healthy place to learn. When children are exposed to violent behavior in the home, DCF gets involved -so why is it okay to allow that exposure in school? It's not okay. I shouldn't have to restrain students-and then worry that I will be accused of abuse. We have had several students accuse the teachers and careworkers they didn't like of abuse (they were escorted or restrained by trained people), so these teachers and careworkers were put on leave until the investigation was complete. Though in each instance they were cleared of wrong doing, their reputation was sullied. Something needs to be done to swiftly address the violent behavior the first time it happens-and involve the family. On any given day in my school we have about 5-10 students having major violent outbursts. This impacts student learning and teacher safety. You are going to see a whole group of students and teachers with PTSD.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Over the number of years I have taught, I have seen the level of behavioral issues increase. Students are put at risk for physical harm. Students have become violent in the classroom, pushing desks, tearing down items off walls, and verbally abusive to fellow students, etc. This affects learning because the teacher has to deal with the child that is causing the disruption. I know of students who have threatened to harm administrators as well as teachers. Though these incidents have been reported to administration, many times little or no action is taken. Administrators have their hands tied depending upon the age of the child. K-2 are not allowed to be suspended, due to a state mandate. We lack the number of social workers and guidance counselors to handle the number of students that need intervention. Parents need to be made accountable for their their child's needs and actions, rather than blaming the school, the teacher or their classmates. Many of my fellow teachers are becoming discouraged due to the issues that are faced on a daily basis. They want to teach but it is difficult due to the aforementioned issues. This bill appears to address the issues, but what steps have to be addressed before a student is removed from a class for violent behavior? What criteria has to be met before the Board of Education takes action? How much time needs to pass before the child is removed? A blueprint for addressing violent behavior should be issued by the State Board of Education. All Connecticut schools should follow the same criteria for addressing violent student behavior.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have been an active teacher in Connecticut for 33 years. The climate is changing and I have watched colleagues be at risk with little or no intervention from the administration.

I am PMT trained but that isn't enough. We need to feel safe to properly conduct ourselves as professionals and instruct students. Please support HB 7110 and help us keep students safe and allow us to properly do our job effectively and safely.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Over the course of my short three years experience teaching I have never felt unsafe in my classroom. That was until a couple months ago when a student who had a history of verbal threats and disruptive behavior towards me attempted to physically assault me in front of my class of 25 students and 2 security guards, who stood idly by doing nothing. The security guards did not have the chance to do anything because the child sprinted towards me after being removed from my classroom for verbally threatening my physical safety. The only reason I was not punched in the face was due to my own quick decision to close the classroom door before the student could hit me. The student continued to punch my door until the school security guards brought the student with them to the office. This came after months of my own attempts to work with the student, guidance and administration to help this child make positive choices in the classroom in respect to their behavior. Together we came up with and tried many things such as a pass for the student to take a break from the classroom, preferential seating, and even alternate assignments for when the student did not want to participate in my lesson. I altered the way that I interacted with the student many times, first the student wanted me to speak in a more stern tone of voice, then the student requested that I speak less sternly. Our student teacher relationship was inconsistent, some days we had positive interactions and the student would take a role as a teacher helper. Others the student would come in and automatically request to leave the room with the pass. It is obvious there was external factors influencing the student prior to coming into my classroom. It is heartbreaking that this attempted physical assault happened, which was started because I requested that the student please put their cellphone away which is not allowed in school. I acknowledged my own concern for my safety formally with my administration constantly prior to the attempted assault and threats to my own physical safety and nothing the administration or guidance personnel did to help me was successful in preventing this from occurring.

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As an elementary school teacher in an affluent community, I have witnessed first hand disregulated students almost every year within the last 5 years. These students show dangerous behavior and risk injury to the students in their regular education classroom. Throwing desks, chairs, kicking, hitting, etc. are some of the behaviors I've seen. These children have no consequences aside from hanging out in a quiet room until they can calm down and return to the classroom. While I feel they deserve the same education as all children, I also feel that the children in the classroom also have rights - the right to feel safe in their learning environment, the right to have few disruptions to their learning, and the right to not be injured by these outbursts. Please help!

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HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Dear Education Committee Members,

I invite you to visit schools and/or personally survey parents and teachers about the effects of the climate policy. In my school alone this year, a system that is seen as a safe, great place to learn and teach, has had students in K-4 who have hit, spit, and thrown things at teachers and students. These children who are acting out cannot be touched, so teachers must stop their instruction and take their whole class out of the classroom, until the four people who have been trained in properly restraining students are able to talk down this child or remove him/her from the class. Yesterday at recess, my only way of protecting a child who had been hit by another child and was being harassed, (the child kept following the student), was by getting between them and putting my arms up. The aggressive child hit my arms several times to try and get at the child and told me when I was trying to talk to him, to "shut up". I had to call the office to have the principal come and get him. During those minutes while waiting all I kept thinking is I am not safe and neither is the child who I am trying to protect.

My niece lost instruction in her classroom several times last year, because of a student who was disruptive and violent. My sister and brother-in-law had to decide the last week of school whether they were going to send my niece to school, because this fifth grader said he had a surprise for the class.

I know these incidents are minor compared to some of the stories I heard this summer from other colleagues at other schools, but no one should be afraid, neither teachers nor students, to go to school.

Everyone wonders how the shootings have taken place in high schools across this country. Ask any elementary teacher and even at a young age we can identify students who need help. The problem continues to get worse. Laws that were made to protect children, restraining laws, are actually hurting children. Laws to keep children healthy, like having recess or gym everyday, have had unintentional effects. Now, a consequence that used to be used for students who needed to make up work because they had been fooling around in class or for students to talk to the teacher about misbehavior has been taken away--recess. Students are not allowed to be kept after school unless the district provides busing, so students have quickly learned their are no negative consequences. They can disrupt class all they want.

While making decisions this year, I ask that you take a long look at possible unintentional underlying messages your laws and policies may have. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A concerned teacher and member of our society

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Connecticut Educator

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Please support HB 7110. Teaching is hard enough especially in urban districts or Magnet schools to worry about safety. Make a difference in keeping students and teachers safe and provide funding to deal with mental health issues in our schools.

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I've been teaching for 25 years in middle school. There is a huge swing on the pendulum of who is in charge of the classroom. The students have all the power, laugh about it, and share many stories on social media exacerbating the situation. They have gotten to the point where kids say out loud "what teacher are we going to get fired today?"

I have been a victim of a false DCF claim. We just got a new principal and a new superintendent within the past year. So for them, they do not know me and my fine reputation, my commitment to students far beyond the classroom, where I chaperoned field trips that were a weeklong (Nature's Classroom), coached seventh and eighth grade girls for nearly 9 years, chaperoned dances and socials, chaperoned the Washington DC trip overnight stays with students, all this and never had one report of hurting a child.

The situation was that a student was cheating, I told her that she shouldn't be cheating and immediately after the test because she thought she was going to get written up or detention. She went to the principal and said that I slapped her hand. The principal did not even hesitate and called DCF before talking to me to get the story. I was immediately ushered out and out of the school for the standard 40 days. I was told by the superintendent and principal that this is standard law practice now. They could not get involved, and no administrator came to my rescue, (with my years of dedication and fine reputation) at all. It nearly killed me, by giving me a mental break down. The community spoke about this and once I was cleared with unsubstantial, everyone said oh that's OK and moved on. But I still now suffer with PTSD, anxiety, and other small health concerns. What a way to end my well established career. Again, the KIDS have all the power. We aren't allowed to speak up.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I was assaulted by a student this year. The student slapped me on the arm. He assaulted other students and paraprofessionals earlier in the year. He spoke to the school psychologist and/or the building principle each time. He was never sent home. Nor was a letter of apology ever written. He was asked to apologize to students, but no apology was made to the paraprofessionals who were assaulted. Instead, he was back to my classroom less than an hour later.

When he slapped me, he was kept in the office for the remainder of the afternoon. I never received an apology. Instead, he blamed others for making him angry, justifying his action.

My biggest concern is the lack of respect teachers are given when assaulted. This student has assaulted other teachers and students since this incident and I predict that this student will continue to assault teachers when angry. Without the proper consequences, I fear that this student has been given the message that consequences will be minimal when assaulting other students, paraprofessionals, and teachers.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I work in two elementary schools AND teach a graduate class at a major private university in CT. I have hear from many, many teachers about disruptive students who are "robbing" other, typical students, of the opportunity to learn in a safe environment. Just yesterday, I was asked to supervise a 1st grader who was "dismissed" from his class after throwing a chair at another student and missing the student's head by inches. He was escorted out the room and on his way, destroyed artwork on the walls of the halls. The classroom teacher is one of best,..experienced and one who is passionate about her job and loves each of students. She is very, very frustrated. This story is repeated to me in my graduate class that attracts teachers from dozens of schools around the state. I worry that our teacher are feeling pretty "unsupported" in this cause. For the record, I have had more than 50 years of teaching and leading schools...it's getting pretty negative "out there!"

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

All involved in the education profession have a right to mutual respect in a safe environment. Every classroom has multiple students that cannot monitor their own actions and reactions.

I am a teacher trained to teach but I'm being asked to do it all with little or no support from the social-emotional professions.

I understand students have a right to a least-restrictive teaching environment but this is at the expense of everyone else suffering. The end result is stress on everyone involved and little or no learning taking place. Behaviors such as abusive language, sexual comments, physical and verbal threats, bullying, students blocking exits, unwanted physical contact, intentional assault, insubordination, students leaving the supervision of a teacher (runners) and defiance put classrooms in jeopardy on a daily basis. This is at every age level, pre-k and up. Teachers and students are victims.

Parental support and involvement is at a minimum despite multiple attempts and phone access unreliable due to throw away phones. This is scary when emergencies come up.

Consequences are discouraged and positive social-emotional strategies encouraged.

BUT I'm a teacher and I cannot teach! And when I need assistance I need assistance, not someone telling me that is not their job or there is no one available right now to assist.

It takes a village with all the right players and full staffing.

You don't ask an accountant to do a medical operation.

You don't ask a sales person to prescribe drugs for an illness.

You get the idea.

Stop asking teachers to do it all and put up with unacceptable behaviors that ruin EVERY day for everyone.

We are not helping anyone if you can do what you want that is hurtful and get away with it.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am a special education teacher in a self contained classroom with students in 3rd-5th grade with behavior disorders. The name of my program is called Behavior Disorder Learning Center (BDLC). I have worked in this program at all levels from grammar to high school in capacities of paraprofessional and now teacher for the last 20 years. Students are assigned through PPT meetings and can come from any grammar school in our district.

At the end of 2016 I had a student who became aggressive toward female staff. My paraprofessional and I were attacked by this student and suffered minor injuries. This student was supposed to be transferred to our district's alternative school, however the administration held off on that decision. Beginning in September of 2017, this same student continued displaying aggressive behaviors toward my female paraprofessional and myself. This student only targeted female staff. Despite many emails, meetings, and conversations with administration he was never transferred. This student attacked me for the next four months every time he returned from a suspension. His attacks included charging at me, punching, kicking, spitting, scratching, and pulling on my body. He had very sexualized behaviors. Police were called every time but only at my repeated requests. Police would not arrest this student. I would be covered in visible bruises and they would not help me. Police would call for an ambulance. However, the parent would show up and decline medical services. The student would never be evaluated by medical professionals and continued to attack me every chance he had. The last attack occurred in December of 2017. I suffered injuries to my neck, back, legs, arm, and shoulder. I have had been in physical and occupational therapy, had MRI's and X-rays, trigger point injections, medications, etc. I now have exhausted all non surgical treatments and have to have an operation to repair the damage this student did to my shoulder. I have suffered from bruises, pain, spasms, sleep deprivation, etc. The quality of my life has diminished in the last 14 months. I am limited to what I can lift or carry. I cannot participate in social physical activities. I go to work everyday. I continue to work with this population. I wouldn't want to work with any other population.

This student clearly needed services that my staff and I could not supply. Our administration did not help anyone involved in a timely fashion. I think back to how many times I told my supervisor that I did not feel safe and did not know how to keep my other students safe. All of my words fell on deaf ears. Had they listened to any of my words during any one of the previous incidents, I may not have had to endure the pain of the last 14 months, nor would I need surgery. The slap in the face now is coming from our district's insurance company. They are purposely withholding authorization for medical care. If I did my job why can't they do theirs? I risk my life everyday to be a teacher for students who have been

cast aside by others. In our district only 1% of the total number of teachers work with this population. When we get injured we should not have to fight to get medical care.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Teacher assaults are occurring almost daily in our communities. This makes it near impossible to give the education to all students. When explicit language occurs in the classroom, education stops. When a table is pushed learning is stopped. When a staff member is threatened physically or verbally safety is halted. Not for one student, but for all students. We are doing a disservice to all if we don't act now. Please consider the future of our children.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have taught for seven years in an elementary school self contained classroom. I have been verbally assisted countless times with vulgar and explicit language. I have had students attempt and actually hit, kick, and bite me. I have had my entire class evacuate from my classroom too many times to count because of one student attempting to throw chairs and desks. I had a student yell so loud multiple times a day without any way to console himself that it would not only disrupt learning in the classrooms on either side of my classroom but disturb learning for two hallways of classrooms. At some point students being asked to "ignore" the disruptions need to have a voice too.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am a special education, I work in the general education classroom. There are students that are extremely disruptive at the point that it impacts the rest of the students learning. At times, when trying to find an alternative place to help de-escalate the student, the student becomes more aggressive and non compliant where they refuse to leave the room. Many times as a special education teacher, I need to handle the student so the general education teacher can continue teaching. Many times, my special education students do not receive their services from me due to the behavior from the escalated student.

All students are mainstreamed with limited resources and barely any training for teachers, this is a major problem in education. It is not fair to us teachers nor the students that are trying to learn. Something is wrong when you need to take an entire class out of their learning environment due to one student that has become disruptive and dangerous to the learning of others. You must act NOW and make a change for the sake of our students and their future learning!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have been teaching for 9 years in the urban district of New Haven. Unsafe student behavior is a daily occurrence in my classroom and school. Students throw desks, chairs, rip down bulletin boards and laugh, kick and hit teachers. Daily. When calling for assistance, administration takes 5-10 minutes to respond and sometimes doesn't come at all. As a teacher, I am not allowed to put my hands on students, and I haven't. So I must sit and watch as a student runs around the classroom in the middle of a math lesson, stapling students shirts, screaming obscenities, throwing books, telling me to F-off in front of 26 kids. Each time, these students are removed for 20-30 minutes then sent back to the room. Teachers are not notified of what the consequences are, and students come back boasting to their friends that they didn't get in trouble. They may spend some time in our "Reflection Room", where unsafe students are sent to regroup. Here 10-15 students at any time are throwing things, swearing at each other, learning new unsafe behaviors.

Our school has one full time social worker, and a part time counselor who is there 2 1/2 days a week to serve the 6-8th grade students, leaving students in grade k-5 without support. The one social worker has over 40 students on her caseload who she is legally required to service, yet administration expects her to be able to respond to students in crisis daily (5-10 times per day on average), in order to try to help deescalate these students.

Earlier this week, a student became upset in the classroom and broke a desk, threw a chair at the window in an attempt to break it, stabbed a staff member with a pencil, kicked and punched the security guard, and scratched the social worker multiple times, leaving marks. His class was in the middle of writing, and were forced to run out into the room across the hall. The student was suspended for 5 days, and will be back, repeating the same behaviors again. Students in his class every day come to school and witness violence, vulgar language, bullying, having to "evacuate" their classroom when this occurs - and this, to them, is normal.

This is not normal. This is not what students in school should be "used" to. Something needs to be done.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

A middle school student walked into my classroom and bump checked me in my chest. It took my breath away that's how hard he did it. He said he did it by accident. Got away with it. It was his word against mine and they took his word.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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We all want what's best for our students, no matter what their needs are. Children need grownups to advocate for them and whether the child has an IEP, 504 plan, or is gifted and talented, teachers need to meet them where they are. This is made difficult however, when my elementary students need to be evacuated from the classroom for their own safety because another student's behavior is threatening their safety, and that of the teacher. I have lost hearing and live with tinnitus, had a broken nose, and sprained wrist because of students with unctrollable impulses. I have never been trained to deal with these students. I don't know proper holds, or other techniques, and our support staff is limited. We only have one social worker for an entire school of over 400 students. Our psychologist is only there part time. It's not enough. Our students, our children, deserve to come to school and learn in a safe, non-violent environment. It is our responsibility as their teachers, as ADULTS, to do everything in our power to give them that.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Schools need a plan to generally and proactively lessen negative behaviors, enhance resiliency, increase the use of deescalation strategies, and

improve social and peer relations skills, which shall include removal of the student and consequences for the student that is disruptive. It is not fair to the other students in the class that are there to learn, nor is it fair to the teacher that is there to teach, when a student is constantly interrupting and/or stopping the flow of the classroom so learning can take place.

As a classroom teacher I have been struck to the mouth, leaving a bruise and bump on my lip from one student. Another year for another student I have had items thrown in the classroom, desks flipped, pencils thrown and a door slammed on my leg over and over while waiting for administration to come to be with the student, so I could take the rest of the class to another location in the building to continue teaching.

Year after year these incidents keep happening. With each year there are more and more students that are acting out. Behaviors are getting more disrespectful, for there are no consequences given. Students are learning they can act negatively, for no consequence is given. They are learning that they can act disrespectful, perform mean acts and they will be welcomed back in the classroom the next day or continue their negative behavior that day for a "think sheet" is not enough to change their negative behavior.

Administration and school boards need to be providing fair education for all students. The students that behave are not getting the education they need. Putting the students that pay attention, that are willing to learn, that behave properly at risk by allowing others that behave negatively in the same room is not right.

The "giving everyone a trophy" needs to stop. Allowing disruptive behaviors from regular education and/or special education students in the classroom that takes away from the teacher teaching and the students learning NEEDS TO STOP! Waiting until an incident student or teacher gets hurt to take action is not right. Action needs to happen the first time a student is disruptive. Action needs to happen the first time a student is disrespectful. Consequences such as missing recess, detention, in-school or out of school suspension, need to be brought back. Classrooms for students that have issues with controlling their behavior need to be brought back so all students get a fair and SAFE education.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have disruptions in my classroom multiple times a day. I get called stupid and dumb on a daily basis and there is little to nothing I can do about it. On average, I'd say someone in my building is physically hit, kicked or assaulted every other day. Right now, there is no solution. These children are being sent back into the classroom everyday and history repeats. We need to find solutions to swiftly rectify these situations and get support for the students who need it most.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

After teaching first grade for 18 years I've seen many initiatives come and go, and then come back. The one thing that remains consistent are the students. We know that children go through specific stages of development where they reach social and emotional milestones at specific ages; some sooner than later and others later than sooner. However, the academic demands placed on students today fail to consider the social and emotional needs of children. We teach children NOT curriculum, but when it comes down to it, we (educators) are held accountable for the curriculum/academics. Last year I had a student in my class who was not ready for the social, emotional, or academic demands of first grade. The frustration exhibited by this student came in the form of deviance, work refusal, classroom distraction (yes, distraction NOT disruption) and then ultimately assault. During one of the many outbursts this student exhibited over the course of the year, I was in the process of picking up all of the materials this student had thrown throughout the room when the student kicked me square in the mouth. The class had already been evacuated from the classroom, so the other students didn't witness it, help was "on the way", and a para was in the classroom to make sure the student didn't elope from the building. After the incident, I met with my administrator about what happened. I was told I'd "get over"; not an empathetic word from my administrator, not even a take a few minutes to regroup, wipe your tears and blood from your lip. I had to go right back into my classroom and act like everything was fine. Continue teaching, with the student back in the room, as if nothing happened. There was no closure, no sit down with the parents and student, no formal apology. Just keep teaching. Incidences like this are happening every day at every level in schools all over. Teachers are expected to move on and "get over it". It's very hard to do.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

The problem I see is students today have no boundaries. Many do not respect authority or themselves. Some swear at the teacher. Many can not take directives so they either act out or swear at the teacher. The use of cell phones has definitely become a major issue in the classroom. Students come to school tired because they do not limit their time on computers, gaming or cellphones. Entitlement is a major issue and it can be very stressful when you have a student or two who act out and bring tension in the classroom.

I love my job but I would like to be respected and be treated as a professional. I have three degrees, two are required by state law. Let us do our job but we need the community to stand by us to make a positive difference.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

Kelly Lane school in Granby is an "inclusive lower elementary school" where teachers and students are assaulted daily by children with ranges of behavioral problems and or mental disabilities. All the assaults are swept under the rug by the principal despite many teacher and parent complaints. My son was assaulted in kindergarten, and second grade on more than one occasion. All of which has been documented. There are many other parents who have reported the same assaults on their children and a few teachers aids who have quit or been asked not to return after being severely injured by said aggressive students. The classroom should be safe for learning for all students and by keeping these problem children main stream the children are falling behind. Teachers are failing their class as they must attend to the constant disruptions. I know my son's second grade scorings could have been better had he not been disrupted constantly. I know people that lost their jobs as they couldn't sit by and watch what goes on in the classroom anymore. A lot goes unsaid to parents because there are privacy laws, but when your child comes home concerned for his teacher who he saw had her nose broken in front of his face by a peer and you've been given no notice it's quite upsetting. They need to change these policies. These kids need special one on one TRAINED teachers and a private classroom. Parents should be notified when an incident occurs in the classroom. We have the right to know. I understand both sides. I feel badly for the children that are having outbursts as they aren't receiving a proper education either. If needed I have copies of all emails my husband and I have sent to the principal and school board. Nothing was done. I'm sure you'll receive more letters like mine as I've shared this page with parents from the peer group last year. Thank you for taking the time to read this and share with legislators. Something needs to be done.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have seen too many children with behavioral issues in the classroom. I understand that these particular children come from damaged, broken homes. However, integrating them into a normal classroom environment, as we do now, does a disservice to that behavioral child, as well as, create a toxic environment for the rest of the children in the classroom.

I have seen 18+ children, grade K-2, cowering under their desks, covering their ears and faces, ushered quickly into hallways and neighboring classrooms due to a behavioral child's outburst. These children are scared and confused. They lose out on many hours of learning time due to the outbursts. They are exposed to dangerous situations, for example, explicit language and body gestures, objects being thrown through the classroom and violence against teachers and staff.

While I believe the behavioral child does needs help, as do the families, I don't believe a regular public school has the resources or trained professionals to provide for them. It breaks my heart to hear these children's stories, as I do not believe any child should be neglected or subjected to violence in the home. Their behavior is a direct result of the daily struggle they experience.

With that being said, it is imperative we look at the big picture and protect all of the children attending school. With cases of behavioral children on the rise, this should be a very clear indication that we need to find a solution for the children and their families. Ignoring the problem or accepting this for the "new norm" should not be an option. Children with violent outbursts should not be allowed in a normal public school setting. It is dangerous to the other children, the teachers and the support staff.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

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Thirty some years ago I was assaulted by a student who threw a chair with steel legs at me. Another teacher came in to cover for me as I left to go to the teacher's room to try to alleviate the pain on my leg. Nothing else was done after I returned to the classroom. And yet after 30+ years there has been nothing done to alleviate physical harm to teachers. Hopefully with this bill passed, teachers and students, will be able to do their job without fear of this kind of behavior.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

A few years ago I worked in a classroom. One of the students was identified as having defiant disorder. He ruled our classroom. I was told by the counselor not to go anywhere near him because he had punched a teacher the year before. One day he pushed all the desks out of the way in the classroom. He used to get up and walk around the classroom and slap kids in the back of the head. One day he told all the kids that their mothers were "WH*RES" The kids were all afraid of him. I was afraid of him too. I called his house numerous times but no changes. At the end of the year I was literally in tears. I asked the kids to tell their parents so their parents could probably call and make a change but that never happened because they were afraid they would get bullied.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

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February 22, 2019

We have several children in our school who have been violent and disruptive to classrooms. A few of them were recently arrested for jumping another student. Out of these three, 2 were sent to an alternative placement last year, but because parents argued and the students "promised to behave," these students continue to attend our school. Another student verbally assaults teachers on a weekly basis because she does not like to be told anything about anything--following rules like dress code, not talking during class, even when approached by a respectful teacher. Another student has the same issue and after trying to start a fight and being guided away from the situation, she pushed at the teacher. This was followed by an office referral and nothing happened to this student but a lunch detention. All of these students have had countless write-ups, lunch detentions, written apologies, faced parent meetings, loss of privileges, etc. for at least 3 or more years. Many of these children are facing situations where they lack parental guidance or the parent does not know what to do anymore. Even with outside supports, these students are constantly disrupting the learning environments of others. As teachers, we write-up offenses to document these issues and request back-up, but the administration relies on lunch detention, student and parent conferences. What more can be done? Suspension rates are part of a principal's and school's evaluation in both the city and state. I worry for the students who have to manage every day with disruptive behavior; these are the students losing out.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

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Last school year, in a regular education

Kindergarten class, I had 6 very dangerous and volatile students. They would have meltdowns that would result in tantrums, throwing objects, destroying the room, screaming, swearing, hitting, biting, kicking other students and myself, to name a few. I addressed this situation with my principal immediately and he was not concerned. As time went on I would call the office for help or remove the entire class while the tantrum went on. Anytime I had to attend a meeting or was out ill extra staff were pulled to help out because it was clearly difficult for one person, yet I was alone most of the time. On the 100th day of school, two boys were moved to other classrooms for the morning only. That left me with four to manage. I did have a social worker and psychologist who would help when they could but daily there was a child or myself hurt or the room was trashed by a student tantruming. I am shocked that any student could learn in this environment as it was a scary place to be. I am a seasoned teacher and used every trick and strategy in my bag to no avail. I was appalled that we could not suspend these violent students or even do in school suspension because the district doesn't allow it. We are in need of a bill to ensure that ALL students are safe and have an appropriate environment to learn in.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

I have been teaching in Trumbull for 11 years now but before then I taught 7 years at Central High School in Bridgeport.

During all my years as a teacher there I heard scary stories of teachers being shoved, hair burned, car keyed etc. During my classes, I put a higher percent of my energy disciplining more than teaching Spanish.

I had great students and great experiences there but the lack of discipline and the weak support by administration encouraged me to leave for another district.

In my 5th year, I had a class with 3 very disruptive, confrontational, and defiant girls who controlled the whole group. It was clear that the other students felt intimidated by these 3 girls and followed their tone.

One day in May, I asked them to sign again the written behavior contract that we had created at the beginning of the year to reinstate and try to redirect their behavior. The head of the department came in to reinstate this step (I had asked him to be present in some of my classes and give me advice on what to do).

Of course, let me remind you that this had not been my first instance of disruption during my classes, however after 5 years I found their "cunning" behavior difficult to manage.

In other cases, for example, during cafeteria duty pushing the garbage trails while being pregnant one girl said: "shut your mouth, bit*h" because I reminded her to clear up her table after lunch for the next wave.

On sweep duty or Hallway duty I have been and I am exposed to the worst language I have experienced in my life, so... let's say I know unfortunately how disruption and disrespect are present in our schools.

This lack of respect is only part of conversation of teachers' lunch and/or maybe therapy sessions. The level of disrespect directed towards our dignity consistently is pretty much unimportant in our society.

Getting back to my incident, these 3 girls got their mothers involved against me and the school. They contacted administration stating that I was picking on them without any reason. These 3 women with very similar personalities to their daughters called me during school hours and administration "asked" me to talk to them even during my teaching hours in order to "calm" the situation. On those conversations one of the mothers told me that I was not a woman enough and I deserved her daughter's

behavior and I was lucky she wasn't coming to see me personally. The worst call was when one of the other moms implied that I was a racist and that explained my decision to pick on them (let's clarify that 80% of the class at least was African American, the other mostly

Hispanic). I clarified to her that if I were a racist, I wouldn't have been working there for 5 years.

Because of this defamation, the PTA came to see me and I had to apologize to this mother along with my department head since one of the girls stated he had been using some inappropriate comments to them when he said: " come here my friends" when he addressed their misbehavior one day in my class.

This apology to them is still today the most humiliating and violating statement of my life. In my teaching career I have the experience of working in a very prestigious school in England, 1 Year in a public school in Spain, 7 years in Bridgeport and 11 in Trumbull now and this is the only time I felt I was involved in a witch hunting case caused by the lack of strong administration who should have supported us (the head of the department and myself) instead of spoiling and enabling misbehavior in our schools.

I know I should have been more proactive with the support of our union and I should have got some advice but I felt administration was on my side and I followed their advice.

I can't even explain how close I was to changing careers!

The Constant "silent" or "loud" abuse that we go through in this profession needs to be addressed. Teachers in this country are not respected and supported.

This respect should come from the students values at home but when this is not the norm, we depend on our administration and government in order to back us up, the ones who try to teach and educate those who will be making everybody's future. When these values are not instilled at home, we need our government to stop and enforce respect in our classrooms.

Thank you!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

I have said for years that the biggest impediment to learning is disruptive behaviors. As a School Social Worker I witnessed and was involved in (and hurt) in numerous situations where the class had to be removed because of one student. In many cases there was a para present, but it takes more than that to diffuse a situation like that and frequently these children are not disturbed, but undisciplined from home. These students cost us a lot!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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I'm a veteran special education teacher and in my years working with children on the spectrum and behavioral issues, the aggression has become significantly worse. My experience with an autistic student 2 years ago left me permanently disabled, lower back issues, wrist and hand surgery and another one pending. Even though I was restraint trained, I encountered a student who was deliberate and precise in his punches and blows and during a restraint popped my thumb back until it snapped. In the last 2 years since I haven't taken any time off from work related to the injuries except for 2 days and scheduled the hand and wrist surgery for the summer so it wouldn't interfere with my job. (I was being a good employee through all this). My point, this student was in a regular classroom and should have been moved to a more appropriate program, rather than waiting the whole year to place him in a self-contained program. Their decision to wait and not place him until the following year in the right program where there would be more behavior support, programming, etc left me and others to endure continued beatings and injuries. Classroom safety also was a daily issue. I taught this child and others like him to moderate their behavior through strategies, behavior plans, social stories, working with families, endless hours of paperwork and data. To what end? To keep students who are aggressive in the same place even though they need a more supportive program just to finish the year? Even though the data shows the regular classroom isn't working? Really? Where are my rights as a teacher? If he was placed appropriately earlier on, I can't help but think, would I have full use of my right hand now?

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HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I currently work in a low income school, where I have 10 severe behavioral students in my class. One is so dangerous that she chokes adults when she becomes enraged. The solution to this problem has been to keep her in the classroom and give her a one on one para. I never know when she will have an episode and live in constant anxiety, wondering if I will even get to teach if I have to evacuate. I currently evacuate my room anywhere from 2-8 times a week.

I have another student who has sexually harassed me and other students in his class. He is so violent and uncontrollable that even as basic demand such as "sit in your chair please," can cause him to hurl the chair across the room. He is in 4-5 fights a week, many of which result in no disciplinary action. Eventually he punched another child so hard in the face repeatedly he almost broke her nose. This resulted in a two day suspension. There is very little teaching that is accomplished with so many behavioral issues. These are just the two most severe students in my classroom, which I failed to mention is an elementary class. Many of these students come from trauma backgrounds and are cognitively inflexible, however, I have no training in how to help these students and my sole job is to educate these children.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I just graduated and got my teacher certificate (023) in Spanish 6-12 on May 2017. As a new teacher I was so excited to start teaching when I got hired in a middle school in Stratford. During my certification and master degree I learned that teaching in middle school can be tough but nothing prepared me for what I passed in that middle school. Students were not only tough but disrespectful and even aggressive. There, I suffered from being called "Bit*h" to being assaulted physically. Administration didn't do much about all cases of students abuse towards teachers. Administration just asked the student to call me to say sorry in order to send back to classes. My nightmare didn't finish there but it scaled to getting hurt physically by one of my students. This student was instigated by a group of students from my class to pull my hair. So during a lesson, when I was walking among the students sitting on their desks, the student got behind me and pulled my hair. It was hard enough to tilt my head to the back. I turned around I confronted the student to ask what he just did, he just said nothing with a big smile on his face. I called office and I sent the student to office. When I called the office to report the incident they asked me for witnesses meaning that they didn't trust me. That student's behavior was well known in the school: he was doing everything from stealing classmates' and teachers' belongings to putting ink in a teacher's coffee. Administration never did anything to him because there were no witnesses of those accusations. Thankfully, he admitted that he pulled my hair, so administration did listen to some of my petitions and remove him immediately from my class. I also requested an investigation of the group of students that instigated him but they never did anything about that. I pressed charges of assault against the student, something that administration tried to persuade me to not to do. The incident happened in Friday, I didn't feel supported by administration and during that weekend I debated with myself if I was capable or not to return to work Monday. I decided to return to work because I felt compromised by a small group of my overall excellent students. However, I was afraid to be assaulted again because the students that instigated the student remained in my classroom. A couple weeks after the incident, administration told me that they would not hire me for the next year. I got assaulted in that school and I got paid by getting fired because the administration didn't like that I pressed charges. Less than a year into being a teacher, I was troubled by thinking if this career was really for me. So, please legislators, do what it's necessary to protect educators and other students from violent students!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

In my classroom, I have been slapped hard enough to leave bruises, bitten and scratched until I bled, I've had chairs and tables and sharp objects thrown at me. I've been attacked by my students. When I asked for support, I was told "they're in your classroom due to their behaviors, so they're already getting the support they need" and despite using every behavioral technique I knew, there was no improvement in their behavior or their ability to be safe students. Just because a student requires a specialized placement for their behavior does not mean I shouldn't get support when my students are leaving scars on my body.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I teach in an inner city pk-6 school. The biggest crisis I see impacting our students is the educational theft that occurs due to chronically disruptive students. When I see the hopelessness in the eyes of 20 students when I try to read them a story and all my attention is diverted to a student crawling under tables, physically hitting or screaming incessantly, I mourn for them. They are missing out on my teaching since I have to primarily worry about keeping them safe from their peer. Instead of a story time with engaging questions and discussion, we maybe can read a few pages before security is called and then we wait for their arrival. In the case of a 35 minute class, this at times has led to the loss of 20 minutes or more of teaching time. Why should the majority lose out on their education due to a few students who need direct intervention and help? Please support those 20 students and more who want to learn by helping to get assistance for the few.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I no longer enjoy going to work. In fact, I am depressed and suffer from anxiety about what each day will bring. I no longer feel like a teacher, but rather like a corrections officer trying to manage each class. Because the state audits suspensions, absences, and missed class time, administrators want teachers to keep students in the class as "they need to be learning, they can't be missing instructional time." What kind of learning can take place when you have students shouting across the room at each other, engaging in conversations while teachers try to instruct, and disrupting other students? Those students that do want to learn are taking a back seat to those that are disruptive, rude, and engage in physical altercations in the classroom. I no longer feel as if I have any control or authority. I've walked down the stairs, and have been hip-checked and told "bit*h! you better watch where you're going!" While on cafeteria duty, I have been ignored as I try to get students to sit down. One student pushed by me to go see a friend and then started yelling and accusing me of pushing her. Consequences: maybe a little time in in-school suspension (full day of ISS is rare as they're are too many students given this consequence so it's a revolving door with no impact or change in behavior). Perhaps an after school detention might be issued - which teachers supervise unpaid - and we have to deal with the same behaviors after school, parents get an extra hour child free and busing is provided. On a rare occasion an out of school suspension might be issued, however, parents have been known to send their child to school anyway and then make themselves unavailable - result: a day in ISS. False accusations and physical assaults, make me fearful and unable to do the job that I want to do and am evaluated on. This mental, emotional and abusive toll that is taking its toll on teachers has to stop!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Oddly, I taught children ages 3-6 years. I'm retired now from the classroom after 20 years. I knew it was time to leave when I would get sick to my stomach every morning, before school. I loved my kids, but frequently, because of THAT child, I would dread facing my day. Hard to believe that these very young children could be so disruptive and explosive. I've been hit, bitten, spit upon, and have had furniture thrown at me. My colleagues experienced the same on a daily basis. It was commonplace to evacuate entire rooms to keep children safe from a child who was dangerous. I have spent a a lot of time away from my normally developing children to meet the needs of children who exhibited challenging behavior. This happens to all teachers. And, much time is spent at IEP, EIP and PPT meetings that could be better spent in the classroom with all of the other students. Spend a day in a classroom in a CREC Hartford classroom and witness what goes on there. It will disturb you.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Last year two incidents happened at my school that continue to come into my mind. First, a student identified with a history of violent behaviors and tantrums had an episode in the computer lab where at least 15 other students were working. The student threw a shoe, striking another student in the head, and bit support staff. The regular education teacher was not instructed to clear the students from the room until the episode escalated into a dangerous situation. Finally, the administration was called in and handled the damage.

On a separate occasion, two students posted hate sentiments and were not reprimanded for their actions due to a teacher threatening the students. Although the teacher was suspended and eventually let go as part of a disciplinary action, the students received no penalty for their actions. The teacher was out of line and didn't act with proper care, eliminating the opportunity for a teaching moment.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I taught school for 32 years before I retired; in this time period, there were several times that I felt unsafe and my concerns were dismissed.

The worst was as follows:

A boy entered class who was classified emotionally disabled; his IEP elucidated his limitations and gave suggestions for facilitating his success. He was, at first, very resistant to instruction, but I was able to get him to participate, using compassion and humor, my two best teaching skills.

I was asked to participate in the IEP meeting for this student. As I listened to the other teachers report their failures with this 200-pound, angry 8th grade boy, I felt glad to be able to report to his parents that he was making small but significant strides in my art class.

One of the parents snorted with laughter and said to the other parent, "Isn't this the one he says he wants to stab with scissors?" Both administrators present began to laugh, as did the parents, as I sat there in shock. The only thoughts I had were of my 2 and 4-year old children at home, and that they needed me, I needed to be safe.

I was unable to speak.

What remains important is that I was inadvertently given a copy of this boy's psychological evaluation with his IEP prior to this meeting, which stated that he could be dangerous, I believe that they were using the term schizophrenic, although it was noted on the form that it was too early in the boy's life for a full diagnosis. I'm not sure if I still have a copy of this- it was over 20 years ago.

After the meeting, I sent a letter to the principal and the special ed teacher and requested that the boy's backpack be searched before he entered my room as he had previously had had a knife in the bag. The request was met with disdain, but reluctantly agreed to.

Eventually, on a day when the boy was in my class and we were using scissors for the project, I enjoined the para working with him to get him a pair and watch him use them. She said, "Oh, I think he has a pair in here", and produced a three-inch bladed pair from his backpack.

There were no consequences for anyone in charge, nor for the boy. Eventually he was so disturbed that he was removed from the 'mainstream' and I did not have contact with him in my class. He still, however, attended my school.

Human decency demands that children with special needs be given the least restrictive and most relevant education that the district can provide. Human decency demands that all children be given the best and safest environment in which to grow and learn, facilitated by compassionate, skilled, and qualified individuals. Human decency also demands that the good people offering their lives in service to children not become martyrs, as did another one of my former faculty friends, Dawn Hochsprung. She taught with us in New Milford prior to joining the Sandy Hook Faculty. Sadly, as a lower paid echelon of society, teachers are traditionally treated as servants rather than highly educated and dedicated people. Perhaps it is our monetary value to the community that causes us to remain a low priority in terms of our working conditions. Or perhaps, school work is something like charity work- essential, but taken for granted.

I can't answer the huge question of why teachers are now teaching in unsafe environments, and their concerns are ignored or mocked. I do know that my husband and I, both teachers, refused to allow our kids to go into the teaching profession. One is a neuroscientist, the other a doctor. Look at what you have lost!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I had a student throw a sharp object across the classroom at another student and made that student bleed. No consequences were given to that student, and he was put right back into my room the next day. I even had the student put into one of my other classes the following semester. I asked that the student be removed because the student was a safety concern and I was told I was labeling students and that I wasn't being fair. The student is still in the class. We need more accountability for students and parents and more support for teachers. Administration seems to be very afraid to discipline students, and we are seeing more disruptive behavior in the classroom as a result.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

As an educator, I know how important it is for both students and the adults who work with them to feel safe at school. I believe that climate should also be non-disruptive. In order to achieve this goal, teachers must be empowered; therefore, teachers and paraprofessionals must be included in testimony of any kind. They should be anonymous if possible. Further, they must be required to report issues referred to here to their administrator within 2 days, especially in the instance of repeat offenders.

Once the incident has been brought to the Administrator it must be incumbent upon that Administrator to make the necessary phone calls within 2 days to all appropriate agencies, parents, BOE chair, and authorities including local police. From what I've seen, sadly this must be applied across grade levels. This should NEVER be the responsibility of a teacher or guidance counselor. The only way to ensure that this issue is adequately addressed is to require Administrators to be responsible for addressing them without teachers fearing reprisals. This means the State must provide real oversight of the Administrators.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am writing in order to hopefully make a difference in making our schools safer. The main issue that I can see is that now that we are following the mantra of SEL we are creating a most dangerous situation in our schools. Our schools are now following the Restorative Practices model for behavior in addition to PBIS. What this essential does is provide the teacher with the resource to remove a student out of the classroom. However, it is not stopping the behavior. There are minimal consequences and the administrators are not taking the matter seriously. Each and every time a student is removed from the classroom, learning is interrupted and had been prior to his/her removal. Although the climate has improved following the models of restorative justice, there are those students that just don't buy in. The teachers in the state of Connecticut work hard for the pittance they earn and are now funding most of the health care costs themselves. They should not be require to withstand the violence and behavioral issues that are exhibited on a daily basis.

Thank You

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am a special education teacher working in a general education elementary school. I am grateful for the support I am able to offer my students, both emotionally and educationally. However, there are students identified and not identified as special needs who disrupt the safety of the learning environment on a regular, DAILY basis. When students are not following directions, disrupting learning, throwing pencils and chairs, physically harming peers and staff on a regular basis has become common place, something has to be done. The same high flyers repeat the same actions day in and day out. Parents are called so many times that they stop responding. Being sent home or being suspended does not occur, largely because of 1) parents do not have transportation to get their children or 2) the school does not believe in suspending students. Therefore, these same students return to class immediately following an incident of unsafe behaviors and do the same thing over and over without consequence. We are actually teaching our children that it is ok to hurt and disrupt their peers and teachers and not suffer any consequence. This is not real-world learning. We are not sending the message that if you are disruptive in a public setting, you will be asked to leave. Can you get away with this at the movies? No. Then why can you in the classroom? Can you get away with punching or kicking someone without getting arrested? No. Then why are we teaching our kids they will not have consequences for this behavior in school?

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am writing this in part because of personal interests but, more importantly, for the interests of my students. Daily, our students are placed in situations which they should never be put in. Partly, this is because our schools and administrators are ill equipped to handle these situation, and also partly because our administrators are working so hard to preserve the number of students being suspended. There seems to have been created a culture in which schools are vilified for assigning consequences to students who completely destroy the learning environment. In turn, when the parents of these children come in and act belligerently in front of administrators, teachers tend to be thrown under the bus and are left to "fix" the situation without much actual support. Part of the problem is that we are not addressing the ever growing special needs population. Special education teachers are expected to manage case loads upwards of 30 students with barely a handful of support staff. This responsibility of providing services gets passed onto the classroom teachers. No wonder some of our students are so frustrated! Nobody is providing them what they need because there simply isn't anyone to provide it!

We need help! We need more support staff and we need to be supported in putting policy in place for abusive parents and students. If someone working for a corporation walked in every day and had their coworkers scream at them and physically and mentally threaten them, there would be a lawsuit. The fact that all of this is allowed in the classroom is not OK! No child or adult should ever fear to walk into a classroom and some of our students and teachers do.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

After being physically attacked by a student who was violent towards staff and classmates for a full year, I had to go to the police to file a complaint before school administrators finally called the parent into school and took action to protect the staff and students and get the child the help they needed.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have been an elementary school teacher for the past 10 years. I have seen a significant decline in appropriate student behavior during my tenure. We spend WAY too much time managing behavior and it takes away from important instructional time for other students. I have had at least one, and some years more than one, extremely disruptive student in my class for the past several years.

Administration fails to provide necessary services and resources. We are strapped for personnel and the real counseling and other services needed to help some of these students. I have been asked to keep behavior logs, spreadsheets, etc on outbursts. This also takes away from instructional time. Also, the data is collected but nothing is done with it. Enough is never enough.

There are No consequences or appropriate interventions for violent students. Students are simply sent home for the day, just to return the next day and repeat the same aggressive and disruptive behaviors.

Recommendations made for parents are not heeded.

Risks to the safety of other students and educators in the classroom. I have been sworeed at, spit on, pencils and chairs thrown at me. If the child is so severely special ed that he or she makes the classroom unsafe, than we are not in fact providing the least restrictive environment. The PPS team works at a snail's pace. I sit in many meetings where nothing gets accomplished and no changes are made. We are NEVER proactive, always reactive to incidents as they arise.

Discouragement of teachers to remain in the teaching profession. I have no doubt that I will not make it to the 35 year retirement mark. I plan to leave the classroom as soon as possible. My patience for the disruptive behaviors has run out and the districts are not doing enough to support teachers with student behavior.

Ignoring behavioral issues in the school now increases the risk of those students becoming involved with the criminal justice system later on. We just move the kids along from year to year and in middle and high school, you'll see them on the news for causing violent behavior as they get older.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

As a special education teacher, I deal with a lot of disruptive behaviors that not only put the child at risk, but the other children as well as myself. No matter how many times they are disciplined or suspended it keeps happening and instructional time is lost. I am also not a punching bag. Something needs to be done.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I have been a teacher in my system for 31 years. I am currently at the elementary level and teach k-5. There is not a day that goes by when I do not have to deal with disruptive and dangerous behavior in my class. I have seen objects thrown, heard foul language used, seen children kick and punch walls and walk out of my room. I have been hit, scratched, kicked and bitten. I have had an 8 year old put his hand in my face and tell me to "shut up bitch". I have gotten off easy compared to some of my colleagues. When help arrives, if it does, children may be removed for a short period of time before being returned, without appropriate interventions or consequences. Generally, the behavior continues or escalates. Many people believe that these behaviors are due to increasing mental health issues. However, in my experience, the majority of these behaviors come from children are not disciplined at home, who will not accept the word "No" and have learned that throwing a temper tantrum works in order to get their way. Teachers are afraid to discipline due to irate parents and lack of administrator support. Administrators are told to keep in-school and out of school suspensions down so their hands are often tied. The day to day stress is tremendous and the fear in the building is palpable. I go home feeling exhausted, abused and discouraged. Great teachers are leaving all the time. There is no learning going on anymore. I see new initiative after new initiative, promising to raise test scores and increase learning. NOTHING will work until we begin to get behavior under control again. It is time for someone to step up and take back our schools. We need to regain control of our classrooms and our schools. We need to restore a teacher's power to enforce the rules and expectations in their classroom. We need to find our backbone. We need to put our collective foot down and say "No more"!

For more stories, check out the NBFT Webpage under survey comments.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am writing to support HB 7110. I have been a teacher for 28 years and have witnessed the digression of consequences and response to disruptive classroom behavior. This is a subject that needs to be addressed as it not only impacts teachers, but other students as well. The consequences that are being used do not send a clear message to disruptive students. Additionally, behavioral issues in school in the early years are often indicators of more severe behavior in the future. There is not only a need for behaviors to be addressed, but also a need for mental health support for many of these children.

Thank you for your consideration!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Please support HB 7110 An act concerning enhanced safety in the classroom. I am currently a regular education teacher, but also served as a special education teacher for over 20 years. I have seen the impact of disruptive and violent behavior in both of my positions. I have been on the receiving end of the walkie talkie call for a disruptive student and have also been the one calling for help. As a regular education teacher, I have been hit, kicked and pinched on many occasions with no serious injuries. My classroom has been trashed by angry students, and my entire class was forced to leave the classroom on countless occasions for safety concerns as another student tore the room apart, threatened injury to another child, or attacked another child. I have seen the heartbreaking fear in the faces of the innocent children witnessing this behavior, as well as the desperate cry for help from the student who is displaying these outbursts. Valuable learning time has been lost and serious social issues have developed. There are limited resources for help, and there is need for consequences that can be supportive and followed through on. More support is needed to stop classroom disruptions and to address the complex needs of all students.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill. Teachers and students are counting on your support.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Teachers and support staff are constantly placed in dangerous situations due to volatile and dystegulated children. I've had chairs, desks, books and other objects thrown at me. I've been punched in the face, bit so hard I have permanent damage, and slapped across the face with a metal hanger while pregnant resulting in medical treatment. These are everyday regular kids committing these acts. I work in a fairly wealthy suburban town, not an inner city or special education facility. Educate yourselves, this is happening daily and is not fair. Our schools are not trained to handle this or equipped with proper resources.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

As a Kindergarten teacher, one may wonder how this can be an issue in a room with children ages 4-6, but it has been an issue. I have had children repeatedly hit me, throw things at me, aim nerf guns at me and swear at me. All of this in front of innocent children who have come to kindergarten excited to learn how to read...not how to hide under desks or evacuate a classroom because their classmate is acting out. We are seeing more and more children coming to us with a trauma background and they are unable to function in the classroom. We, as educators are unprepared to meet the needs of these trauma children and we are perpetuating the trauma by allowing other children in the classroom to witness their teacher being attacked, by being bullied and attacked themselves and by being made to be in an environment that is not a safe and pleasant learning environment. We are not talking about traditional classroom misbehavior. These children in their pain are acting out and quite frankly are very scary in their rages. I tried so many different strategies, techniques and classroom modifications to meet the needs of the trauma child. These efforts were not successful and I went home daily feeling like a complete failure to the trauma child and to the rest of the children in my class...some of whom had their own traumas that they were dealing with as well as being in a classroom with this violent child. My top priority and goal in my classroom is to provide a safe, happy and positive learning environment for the children in my class. This is the very basic first ingredient in the recipe for an effective and successful classroom. I pride myself on being a place where children love to come and are sad to leave, a place where we love to learn and we work hard because we want to be successful. All of this is not able to occur when there are constant outbursts or the anxious time waiting for the outburst to happen, because no one knows the triggers! That is NOT ok. That is not how a 4-6 should be living in school. Many children only have school as their safe place where someone loves them and supports them...now they are some children that do not even get to have their safe space at school. We need to have a plan, we need to trust teachers when they say a child is having issues that are not in the normal realm of classroom behaviors. We need to act proactively, not reactively, and help the children with these intense outbursts before they act out in violent and dangerous ways. We need to give them the tools so they can be successful in the classroom, not drop them in a classroom and wait for them to lose it and traumatize the whole class while the situation is handled. Teachers are being asked to meet lofty academic goals in all areas, yet how is one supposed to teach when we are responding to outbursts and trying to protect students? I know I lost my motivation to be an outstanding teacher when I was dealing with this type of trauma child. All of my energy was on survival and preventing my class from getting hurt. We all lived walking on eggshells because we didn't want to set him off. This year I do not have any high impact children and I am able to remember that I love teaching, and that I am a good teacher...but two teachers down the hall are now in the teaching nightmare now and I can only support them and

remind them that it is not them, that they are doing all they can, but it is NOT RIGHT! I feel bad for the trauma child because they are being labeled as a "bad child" and the children are afraid of them. We are setting them up for failure, and not "teaching" them what they need. They need direct, explicit instruction on how to handle their big feelings appropriately. We need to allow them a quiet, safe place to practice before they are overwhelmed in a regular classroom. When we have children with autism, we understand they learn differently and need more supports and practice with skills. We give them one-on-one paras so they can try being in the classroom when they are ready and can be taken for a break when signs are seen that they need a break. We need to treat trauma/extreme behavior children with the same respect and the same understanding! They need to be taught, they need to be supported, and it is their right to be successful at school, just as it is the right of all of the other children and their teacher to be in a safe learning environment.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

I was 6 weeks pregnant. A little girl in third grade was throwing chairs in my classroom. I was terrified by this because I was expected to deal with this kind of behavior each week. Not only was I scared to get hurt, my blood pressure and anxiety were being affected. Stress during pregnancy is obviously not a good thing.

Besides myself, my 18 other students were also fearful. They have no voice here. They are basically being told their educational rights do not matter. What we put on the other students that CAN function in a general education classroom is not developmentally appropriate to handle especially in what is supposed to be a safe learning environment. These kids are being TOLD, not asked, that it is their job to deal with the screaming and throwing of objects. Again, they have NO voice.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

We are facing a very grave crisis that is increasing each year. I have been teaching since 1997 and I have never faced the level of disruptive behaviors than I have in the past several years. For me it peaked 2 years ago when I had 2 students in my classroom who had "trauma" or "adverse childhood experiences" which affected their ability to function in the classroom. As Kindergarten students, these children did not have IEPs or any supports in place. One student reacted to triggers with the "flight" response and the second student had the "fight" response. I was on high alert every moment of the day. With cue cards hanging from a lanyard on my neck, clipboards with behavior charts in my hand, and a reward timer clipped to my belt, I juggled to hold a marker or the pointer to actually teach with. I was a one-on-one para for 2 students, a therapist, a psychologist, data analyst (tracking all disruptions- including what happened before and after), and oh yes, I was supposed to teach while implementing all lessons with fidelity. Research shows that there is such a thing as Secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and I had it. My heart broke for these students and the remaining students in my classroom who were listening to the daily yelling, screaming, swearing, or walked the halls with me as we evacuated intensely stressful situations. These children needed more support than I could give while teaching a full classroom. The disruptions to the education of the majority of the students in my classroom was not only unfair but often traumatic. These children with trauma need help and the remaining children of the classroom need to be rescued from the trauma they are being exposed to in the classrooms.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I expect that student behavioral problems will persist as long as technology is mandated to be used during the teaching/learning processes. Students are yearning for attention and have lost the support of "in-depth" learning. When people of any age learn topics thoroughly, they are more masterful of what they've learned, and are left feeling confident and proud. Our students, who attend schools in districts where fast-paced learning is the expectation, are left feeling frustrated and overwhelmed. "Quality" teaching, instead of "quantity", must return to our classrooms.

I have been teaching for the past 30 years and have noticed a steady decline in appropriate student behaviors during the past 2 years. Our students are being robbed of healthy interactions with their teachers and peers. It is my hope that the school district, where I just retired from 2 years prematurely,

will reconsider and reevaluate their decision to evaluate teachers on how they implement instruction using technology. As a successful and effective elementary school orchestra teacher for the past 30 years, I observed this having a detrimental effect on my students and the school music program in general. Once our students are again provided with opportunities to engage with their teachers and peers, in-depth learning will be supported. As a result, frustrations and negative behaviors will be reduced or eliminated.

Also, what happened to "zero tolerance" and/or appropriate interventions?!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

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HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

In my district, students regularly assault teachers and other students. These assaults come in the form of physical assault, verbal assault, and non-compliance. While there is a written plan, the district is sorely lacking in follow through. There are never enough resource/security officers around, and the students removed from the classroom due to an altercation are often returned to the classroom within the same class period. The behavior is openly played down under the ruse that students won't learn if they are not in class. The district cannot report high numbers of suspensions or expulsions so they circumvent the system to keep the numbers down. This is hurting the staff, faculty and most of all, the students. These students inhibit the learning of others because of constant disruption. Appropriate interventions include in-school suspensions, removal from school for the day, or longer, and calls home. This does happen, but not to the extent that it should. We are frustrated with dealing with behaviors to the point of mentally not being able to handle each day. Students wander the hallways, bang on doors and play loud music in the hallways just to annoy and bother classes in session. Often, we call for security to remove a student from the room and they do not come. Sometimes they come, but after 20 or 30 minutes. This system is broken. The students need intervention and appropriate services in order to be able to be successful in this district. The public hears that test scores have gone up. What they don't hear is that the harassment and violent behavior of the students is driving good teachers in the district to seek employment elsewhere or to leave the profession completely. I have taught in urban school districts in the past, but none that are in the disarray that this district is. We need good leadership and appropriate funds, programs and staff for any change to occur in this district.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am a teacher and since I began teaching, I have seen the response to violent and illegal acts committed within our building change. One would think that in the aftermath of so many school shootings and stabbings, some very close to home, our response and preventative measures would be strengthened. However, it seems as though our administration and superintendent want to keep incidents out of the public eye and, from the perspective of the teachers, are not taking events seriously. We have had weapons, drugs and fights in the building in the past 6 months and not one student was arrested. A teacher was badly hurt while two students were fighting, but the emergency services were not called. Although that teacher was told that it was within their rights to file charges independently of the school, what would their working situation be like once the student returned from suspension? How would the classroom run with a student present that they just had arrested? There should be a school policy that the police get called in situations where students fight and someone was hurt, no matter how "severe the situation seems to administrators". It should not be up to them to decide.

I feel we are not reading the signs of violence in our school. We have evidence that we are ignoring. Students know what they can get away with and are coming to school angry. Students don't know how to deal with their emotions and we are not equipped to help them in many cases. Faculty at the schools where tragedy has occurred must think back to before: what signs did we miss, what could we have done differently? I hope our district makes changes soon so we are not asking those same questions.

Thank you for listening,

A concerned parent, teacher, and citizen in Connecticut

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

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February 22, 2019

I could write forever, but have chosen to share one experience from last week! I was trying to direct a student to complete her work! She responded by telling me I was "an idiot and she hoped I was going to be fired!" I sent her to the office and she did write a letter of apology that may or may not have been heartfelt! I have known this particular student for four years, and this incident was one of many over the four years! I have seen her twice since the incident and her behavior was drastically improved the first time, but by the end of the second time her behavior had reverted back to normal! The worst part is not that she fails to do acceptable work, but every time one of these incidents happens, it interrupts the flow of the class and sometimes I just end up counting the minutes until the class is over! Of course, I had a talk with the Vice Principal concerning the behavior of the student! Like usual, I felt like I was tap dancing during this discussion because more often than not the way I handled the incident is questioned!!! Until students are held accountable and expected to behave, the amount of learning that takes place is very little!

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

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It is great that the issue of lost regular education instructional time due to children with traumatic outbursts and unstable behaviors is being addressed. It is a timely and important issue as every teacher I talk to has a story of having to constantly stop instruction for all students to deal with the behavior of one or a few. These are behaviors that are unsafe and emotionally traumatizing for the other children who witness it. I wish I kept count of all the instructional time lost in my room.

This legislation talks about training, protocols and procedures but doesn't do enough in terms of protection for teachers and direct impact on classrooms-how is the integrity of regular education going to be protected?

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

It is unfortunate that our teachers fear going to work. It is unfortunate that our teachers have to run a psych ward because of a few, rather than a classroom for many who want to learn. It is unfortunate that my child has not had a full day with his teacher since the beginning of the year because one of many students causing problems in the classroom is demanding more attention. Its also unfortunate that our teachers are getting no support for this and that these disruptive students are being allowed back in the classroom within the next day. This is not acceptable. Once a student is removed from a classroom, the student should be permanently removed until rehabilitation occurs. The classroom is not safe. A student who acts out once has the ability to do so repeatedly and its not safe. My child who wants to be in the classroom and enjoys school and what they are learning is disrupted because another child cannot control their behavior. So my child loses valuable instructional time with the teacher because the disruptive student needs a hug? If a student is being so disruptive they need to be removed from a classroom, they need more one-on-one attention than a classroom of 18+ students can provide. It is not fair to the teacher or the other students that this student is demanding attention. Please, do not continue to punish the children who want to be in the classroom and the teachers who paid immense amounts of money to become teachers. They did not do this to be punished, abused case workers - they did this because they love to teach and have something to offer the children who want to be there.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

That's right-we have a crisis in Connecticut classrooms. Student behaviors have escalated to a dangerous level in schools across our state. I teach in a rural school district, and I have seen a dramatic increase in disruptive behaviors in my classes. The inability to focus on instruction and deal instead with outbursts and other behaviors is having a negative impact on children. We get minimal support from administrators or parents. Discipline is almost nonexistent in my school. Once parents complain, we have no authority to control our classrooms. Students with IEP's are protected by law, and often cannot be held accountable. I hold an MA in special education, so I am aware of the needs of all learners; however we can no longer ignore the impact on others. We have children making threats to both teachers and staff, as well as daily verbal harassment. We are unable to inform parents of some of the behaviors impacting their children, and we are facing record numbers of injuries and lost teaching time. This has to stop! CT children and educators need your support. We need new legislation to protect all members of our schools, not just those with IEP's.

Connecticut has some of the best educators in the state, however we cannot meet the needs of all learners without more support.

Thank you for considering this critical issue to improve our schools.

Middle School Educator

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

Although I have not been the recipient of physical assault, I am the recipient, like many other teachers of verbal, disrespectful behavior. It is this behavior that is typically escalates.

I work in a school where a classroom teacher recently had her nose broken because of a disruptive student. This behavior has been on-going. This student is five years old.

For reasons unknown, building administration is doing little to address the specific student.

This is in addition to several other students in our same school that are also blatantly disrespectful. One is in sixth grade the other in forth. It is weekly, if not daily, that a personal management state trained team has to intervene.

These behaviors have been going on since they have been in first grade at the school.

The acceptance/allowance of this unsafe, inappropriate behavior is a huge disservice to those students who are instigating it, as well as to their peers and all teachers involved.

It would be beneficial to all students and teachers to have a state law where administrators are required to intervene with the separation of a student from their class when they are being disruptive physically or verbally.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am a kindergarten teacher in a primary school. This is my third consecutive year teaching a student with severe behavior problems who has experienced trauma, abuse, neglect and/or being born addicted. I am very concerned about:

1. The lack of support for students who have experienced trauma and display aggressive behaviors.

I have a student in my class this year who throws school materials, bangs objects, throws chairs, hits staff, yells, growls, urinates through her clothing, and threatens students and staff ("Im going to kill all of you.")

This student was in a therapeutic treatment program in the afternoon and then was "kicked out" of the program.

Currently, the goal for her is to be in the classroom with her peers. Every effort is made to keep her calm. She is not expected to work or follow classroom routines.

Since the end of December, she has had a 1-1 para in the morning. This student prefers not to be part of a group or around other students, so she and the para sit in the back of the room. When calm, she plays, sleeps or listens to the para read a book. In the afternoon, if she chooses to be in the classroom, she sits next to me and usually plays or sleeps.

2. The impact students with aggressive behaviors have on other students.

Students are distracted, stressed and scared by the students' behaviors.

The students lose instructional time due to me trying to help the student and when we evacuate due to unsafe behaviors.

One student reported to his mother that he did not want to go to school because of the child with aggressive behaviors. Recently, for three weeks, he cried before and during school. In addition, he kept asking, "How many more hours until school is over?" and made frequent requests to use the bathroom and the cozy corner.

3. Being assaulted by a student myself.

This year I have been hit by my student while in my class and a student from another class while on lunch duty.

I was surprised when this student was dropped by the therapeutic program. If they will not help her, then who will? We are not supporting my current student, we are containing her. We are also negatively impacting other students. I wonder, are we traumatizing them?

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I am writing this letter in support of HB 7110 - An Act Concerning Enhanced Classroom Safety and School Climate.

I am an elementary school teacher in Danbury, and I have taught both 4th grade and now Kindergarten. In both grades I have had students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) who have lead to violent, disruptive behavior in my classroom. I am going to provide my own experience in order to emphasize the importance of having more detailed plans for students who have EBD, specifically when these students need to be removed from the classroom.

While teaching 4th grade I had an autistic student with ADHD and EBD. Over the course of the year, we had to evacuate the classroom five (5) times. This student threw desks, put hands on other students, required over ten (10) protective holds, and in several instances threatened-and did-harm staff. I went to PMT (Protective and Psychological Management Training) and our school developed a Crisis Team. After several PPTs, a functional behavior assessment, and working with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, I still went 180 days - a full year - without a tutor for this student. He began to exhibit these behaviors in October of that school year. Even with a full time social worker, part time psychologist, modified behavior plans, an IEP, and outside support through a therapist, this student still exhibited these behaviors in May. In fact, they worsened. As a teacher, I had more support than most, and still felt like I was being left at the mercy of this violent student who I cared very much about but could not help.

When I would go to his PPTs, I was always told there was no money for tutor support. Or, worse, there were no tutors. I would take hours to prepare data, and none of it seemed to matter. So, we had no choice but to take tutors within our school from children who also needed them. We created a temporary, every changing schedule with random and unpredictable support for a student who desperately craved consistency. His behavior worsened. By May, he was headed to 5th grade no better than when he entered 4th.

Additionally, when it was time to put this 4th grader into a hold, there was no safe space. We typically used the teacher's room, but there was almost always things we had to put away like scissors, paper cutters, etc. The student could not be released from the hold in order to self-sooth, because we did not have padded walls.

In addition, when a hold was required, it took up to 6 staff members. These staff members are part of our Crisis Team. They have to leave their classrooms, uncovered, in order to promptly arrive to a crisis situation. This meant that my students privacy was at risk, because the entire school knew when something was going on.

All of what I have described is not ideal. It is not in the best interest of the student, staff, or families.

I wish I could say that I didn't hear this elsewhere. But I do.

The risk of safety to students and staff should be a priority in every school district.

HB 7110 will require schools to put plans in place. It will begin a very important dialogue over how we, as educators and administrators, can best support students who exhibit violent and disruptive behavior.

In the end, everything we do is for our students. And currently, what we are doing for EBD, Autistic, violent, and disruptive students is not enough. If we want to meet the demands of the inclusive classroom, than we need plans and support in place to help our most at risk students learn and be safe.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

I have been teaching for 11 years. Last year I was pregnant. I had students yelling at me, throwing pencil boxes, books, and crumpled up papers at me, as well as being threatened to have a filing cabinet flipped on me. I had to evacuate my classroom often. No one cared that I had lost a baby full term the pregnancy prior, no one cared that my classroom sounded like a domestic violence case and I was the battered wife . They also did not care about how the other 20 students were feeling about what they were witnessing. What about their emotional needs and safety, not to mention learning?

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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Teachers work very hard to inspire, motivate, and help learners. The classroom should be a safe and respectful place for all people. It is unacceptable to allow threats, intimidation, or violence in a place of learning.

In current years, teachers are given more accountability despite having very little power over their occupation. With the rise of responsibility it should be ensured that teachers and students work and learn in the highest quality setting.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

I am a special education teacher at a K-2 school. Some may not think this age group exhibits violent behavior, but I would say they are actually the most violent. People do not take it seriously because they are "little." However, these students are the most emotionally dysregulated and have the least schooling experience and can really be dangerous. I have worked both with "mainstream" students and "behavior students" in a separate room. Over the past few years, I have seen multiple kindergarten students completely destroy a classroom--forcing the teacher and classmates to relocate and sometimes, the classmates to pick up the mess. I have been hit, kicked and scratched way too many times to count. I have been spit on numerous times--at times it was so severe that we had to wear paper "shields" while the student(s) continued to spit. I have had students run outside to our parking lot, attempt to run down the street and off school property. I have had students throw heavy objects (such as sink drain plugs) at my head. I have had to determine whether to place hands on a student when they run across radiators or attempt to remove screens and climb out windows. Administrators often do not know how to respond. Sometimes students are sent home. Sometimes parents are called in. Almost never is there a true "consequence," or even a discussion with the team about how to prevent this behavior or respond to it. There is never a debriefing and the teacher or special education teacher is the one who ends up hurt, not the administrators. The injuries students have caused to myself and numerous other staff in the building would be considered major assault in any other profession. I understand more than anyone that these students, especially our youngest ones, have many emotional/behavioral needs. But the safety risk they pose to students and staff is not acceptable.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

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February 22, 2019

It seems as if on a daily basis, teachers are getting punched, kicked and spit on by 1 or 2 students. Although these students are in kindergarten, they are given lots of opportunities to correct the behavior. These students are sometimes removed from the classroom but return, repeat the same behavior and are not really given any consequences. So the behaviors continue. This could lead to other students thinking that those behaviors are acceptable. I have had the same student refuse to follow directions putting himself and others in danger of getting injured.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

Before the Education Committee

HB 7110 AAC Enhanced Classroom Safety And School Climate

February 22, 2019

I've worked in my district for many years. I have had multiple students with serious aggression issues and who were emotionally disturbed. I had a student one year when I taught Kindergarten during my second year of teaching become violent . I had a male student in my class who would repeatedly hit, push,kick, and put other students in head locks. He was removed from another classroom and put in mine because I previously worked with him in preschool the year before. The principal thought it was best for him to be placed in my classroom due to me being his teacher the previous year. He was removed from the previous classroom because of his aggressive behavior towards others. His aggressive behavior continued to escalate. Meanwhile, I have several other students with special needs and behavioral problems. On one particular day we were outside on the playground. I saw the little boy put a little girl, who was in my class and selectively mute, in a head lock. I went over to intervene and tell him to keep his hands to himself. He then stopped and ran after me trying to hit me. Even though this child was in Kindergarten I was terrified . I'll never forget that day. I was very afraid and extremely scared. It felt like I was no longer dealing with a 5 year old it felt like I was dealing with an adult. I ended up trying to run away from him and tripped over the wood chips. I then immediately fell to the ground. The two other Kindergarten teachers that were outside had to hold the little boy so he wouldn't harm me. If they had not been there to stop him I'm not sure what he would've done. The school psychologist came when the other teachers called for assistance on the walkie talkie. The school psychologist brought him to get a toy snake from her treasure box. I was flabbergasted and in shock. I couldn't believe he wasn't taken somewhere to cool down and was rewarded for attacking the other student and myself. He was back within minutes after the incident with no consequences showing all the students his new toy snake he just had earned. I was so upset. I did speak to my union rep. I informed them of the incident and they stepped in and brought it to the head of the union . The head of the union then brought it to the principals attention. The principal was unaware that she was supposed to report the incident to local authorities. It was then reported. Soon after he was transferred to a classroom that better fit his needs. This day is forever in my memory. I will never forget how scared I felt that day. Unfortunately I have seen this time and time again. Children are verbally and physically being aggressive and unsafe in the classroom. Then their behavior is often being rewarded and frequently the teacher is blamed for the student's behavior. Teachers must be able to come to school and feel safe in their classroom. The students also deserve to be educated in a safe environment free from violence and abuse at the hands of other students. It is time. Something needs to be done not only to protect teachers and their safety but the students in their classroom as well. I also have spoken to many other teachers who have also been subjected to physical violence and abuse. It needs to stop once and for all.

Written Testimony of

Connecticut Educator

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February 22, 2019

Last year I had an aggressive student. The child was 8 years old but he caused so much chaos in the building that both adults and children were fearful to come to school. Once the child held a pair of scissors over another student's head during art class. He threw desks, chairs, and other items. The child would run from the building, climb on desks hide in closets.

There was not much I could do. The rest of the class lost valuable teaching/learning time. I tried to keep everyone safe. That was the priority. We need support for adults who work with these children as well as the children who have severe emotional issues. The school was not equipped to handle a child like this. There was resistance from home.