



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Rick Allen (R-GA), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Hearing:**

**"Classrooms in Crisis: Examining the Inappropriate Use of Seclusion and
Restraint Practices"
February 27, 2019**

"Ask any parent, grandparent, teacher, or volunteer who has been entrusted with caring for more than one child at a time, and they will tell you that every child is created to be unique. They'll also tell you that that uniqueness can sometimes present challenges, especially when it comes to maintaining a sense of order and safety in a classroom.

When an authority figure in the classroom has to take measures to keep order and safety, several things are happening at once. They're dealing with the child at the center of the disruption in a very personal way. And the other children watching are learning lessons about leadership and compassion that they often don't realize until later. In the best of situations, the teacher has to make an in-the-moment judgment call to address the disruptive or potentially disruptive situation in a way that protects everyone in the room. And as we'll see today, sometimes, they get it very wrong.

In business, we talk about how a one-size-fits-all approach just doesn't work. This is even more true when it comes to children. This committee has worked hard, in a largely bipartisan way, over the past several years to listen more carefully and defer wherever possible to the people who have been called to educate the children they know better than we ever will.

The most recent example of this is the *Every Student Succeeds Act*. This Committee made it clear when finishing our work on that law that we expected each state to articulate how it will support and provide resources to school

districts to “reduce techniques, strategies, interventions, and policies that compromise the health and safety of students, such as seclusion and restraint.”

Some 44 states have laws or policies on the books governing the safe and appropriate use of seclusion and restraint in the classroom, with an additional three states providing guidance to school districts on how to properly use these techniques when necessary.

Finding new, better ways to address behavioral problems in the classroom requires states to engage thoughtfully and meaningfully with parents, local stakeholders, disability advocates, school safety experts, and members of the community to ensure that students are safe and local needs are met.

We are certainly united in the opinion that improper seclusion and restraint practices shouldn't have a place in education moving forward. Our good intentions do not change the fact that the policy details matter, every community is different, and a federal one-size-fits-all mandate would interfere with the important work that states, the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice are already doing on this issue.

We also need to be reasonable in our expectations. None of us can be in every classroom, and we can probably never know the specifics, or even the larger context, in which every incident has occurred. Those are just some of the reasons those of us in this room should be very careful in assuming we can draft additional legislation on this issue.

I'm grateful to today's witnesses for making the time to be here today to share your experience and expertise on this emotional and difficult issue. I am eager to hear how far we have come in moving away from problematic discipline practices while simultaneously protecting educators' ability to respond swiftly, effectively, and safely in rapidly changing circumstances to ensure the safety of all students and personnel.”

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