May 30, 2012

The Honorable Gregg Harper  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Harper,

The undersigned members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Education Task Force write to thank you for your recent editorial on restraint and seclusion in schools. We are deeply grateful for your commitment to this issue and your efforts to advance the Keeping All Students Safe Act, H.R. 1381.

The Keeping All Students Safe Act will establish national minimum standards for the use of restraint and seclusion in schools, strengthening protections in every state and ensuring the safety of all students and school personnel. The bill will ensure that restraint and seclusion are used only in emergencies threatening physical safety. The bill also promotes a shift toward preventing problematic behavior through the use of de-escalation techniques, conflict management and evidence-based positive behavioral interventions and supports. This shift of focus will help school personnel understand the needs of their students and safely address the source of challenging behaviors – a better result for everyone in the classroom.

We wholeheartedly agree that most of our nation’s educators recognize that each child is precious and are committed to educating all of their students. But we also know that they need the appropriate support and guidance in order to do so. Many schools are already implementing best practices in managing problem behaviors; the Keeping All Students Safe Act will promote the use of these practices in all schools and ensure that school personnel receive the training that they need.

We are saddened by the recent statistics from the Office of Civil Rights and we are concerned by several of the recent news reports about restraint and seclusion. As you said, our nation’s children deserve better. We need more than the current patchwork of state laws to ensure that every child is afforded protection.
We applaud you for your efforts and leadership, and we look forward to working with you to move this long-overdue legislation quickly through Congress.

Sincerely,

ACCSES
Advocacy Institute
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Foundation for the Blind
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Autism National Committee
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Council for Exceptional Children
Council for Learning Disabilities
Council of Parent Attorneys & Advocates, Inc.
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Higher Education Consortium for Special Education
Mental Health America
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Center for Learning Disabilities
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Down Syndrome Society
National Parent Teacher Association
National Rehabilitation Association
Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Arc
United Cerebral Palsy

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities is a coalition national consumer, advocacy, provider and professional organizations headquartered in Washington, D.C. Since 1973, the CCD has advocated on behalf of people of all ages with physical and mental disabilities and their families. CCD has worked to achieve federal legislation and regulations that assure that the 54 million children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into the mainstream of society.

For additional information, please contact:

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