

Dear Members of the Seclusion Working Group,

Thank you for your continued work to examine seclusion practices and to develop recommendations that prioritize the safety and well-being of both students and staff. As a Setting IV School Social Worker, I wanted to share my perspective on the current proposals and the broader implications for practice. I have worked in Setting IV for over 13 years.

In these programs, staff work daily with students who have complex needs and may present in acute crisis. These environments inherently carry risk, and staff experience both primary trauma—direct exposure to challenging and sometimes dangerous situations—and vicarious trauma from supporting students through ongoing distress. Many of our students and staff, particularly BIPOC individuals, are impacted by intergenerational and historic trauma, which shapes behavior, responses to crisis, and access to resources. Without adequate training, funding, and support, this combination of trauma and high-stress work can lead to teacher burnout, decreased effectiveness, and increased safety risks for both students and staff.

While I share the goal of eliminating seclusion long-term, proposals like the *Hard Stop* do not reflect the realities of our work or the broader social, political, and cultural context. Removing seclusion without providing fully funded, safe alternatives would create a “safety vacuum.” Many of our students are already deemed “too physically aggressive” for other settings, meaning there are no realistic services or programs to place them if they cannot remain safely in schools. Immediate elimination of seclusion without this infrastructure risks unsafe conditions, lost learning opportunities, and further marginalization of BIPOC students and staff.

The *Runway with Support* approach offers a balanced, trauma-informed path forward. It preserves seclusion as a last-resort emergency tool while funding and technical support are provided to implement evidence-based alternatives with fidelity. This approach acknowledges both student and staff trauma, supports staff well-being, and provides a realistic path to eventually reduce reliance on seclusion without compromising safety, program integrity, or access to education for our most vulnerable students.

In summary, thoughtful reform must consider the realities of our programs, the trauma our students and staff carry, and the structural inequities that shape their experiences. *Runway with Support* allows us to build safer, more equitable systems while maintaining a protective framework for students and staff.

Warmly,

**Cara McGlynn, MSW, LICSW (she/her)**



Teacher on Special Assignment

District School Social Work Lead

District McKinney-Vento, Fostering Connections, and Migrant Student Liaison

Phone: 651-415-5426

**My Office is a Safe Space** ❤

