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January 14, 2010

The Honorable George Miller
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris-Rodgers
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller and Representative McMorris-Rodgers:

On behalf of 60,000 pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists of the American Academy of Pediatrics, I would like to express our strong support for H.R. 4247, the *Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act*. This needed legislation will protect students, particularly those with disabilities, from the unnecessary and potentially dangerous use of seclusion and restraint by creating the first federal guidelines regarding the use of these practices in schools.

An alarming Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released in 2009 revealed that children with disabilities are too often subject to seclusion and restraint in response to behavior issues at school. Incidences of these practices have led to injury and death. Rather than the use of aversive techniques such as restraint or seclusion, the Academy supports the use of positive behavioral supports to child change behavior. The GAO report showed that state guidelines on seclusion and restraint vary widely and there are no federal laws that govern the use of these practices.

The legislation would direct the Department of Education to establish new national standards regarding use of restraint or seclusion in schools. These standards, at a minimum, would prohibit restraint or seclusion use on a student unless there is a risk of imminent harm to self or others. Neither restraints nor seclusion could be included in any student's individualized education plan, and if either is used, parents would have to be notified. States would be required to develop plans assuring adherence to these new guidelines, and grants would be provided to states to implement the new policies and to train school personnel in positive behavior management techniques.

Thank you for your dedication to the health and well-being of children. We look forward to working with you in the passage of this legislation

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith S. Palfrey".

Judith S. Palfrey, MD, FAAP
President

JP/mdm