

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

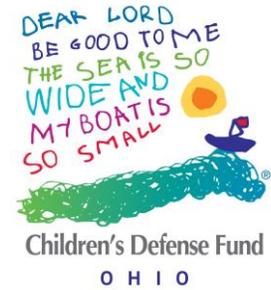
Tuesday, February 10, 2015

For more information contact:

Naila Awan | 614.221.2244 | nawan@childrensdefense.org

Renuka Mayadev | 614.221.2244 | rmayadev@childrensdefense.org

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio



Ohio Schools Restraining and Secluding Our Most Vulnerable Children: Children's Defense Fund-Ohio Shows a Better Way

Columbus, Ohio – Children's Defense Fund-Ohio has been closely studying the practice of seclusion and restraint and is releasing an Issue Brief today that outlines concrete steps that can be taken to help reduce the use of these harmful practices.

In the last two years, the state of Ohio has taken important steps forward in the effort to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint in schools. In 2013, the Ohio State Board of Education approved a policy and administrative rules that regulated the use of restraint and seclusion in Ohio schools. And, in December 2014, the General Assembly unanimously passed legislation that allows the State Board to extend its policy to charter and STEM schools.

However, despite efforts to curb the use of these harmful practices, the Ohio Department of Education recently reported that children in Ohio's public schools were secluded about 5,000 times and restrained approximately 9,000 times in the 2013-14 school year. Approximately 80% of those restrained being students with disabilities.

"Force in schools should be used only as a last resort. Overuse of seclusion and restraint does lasting harm to our children, especially those with disabilities," said Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director of the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. "The fact that there were over 14,000 instances of seclusion and restraint in Ohio public schools during the first year that the State Board's new rules were in effect proves that additional efforts must be made to safeguard the health and well-being of Ohio's children."

As noted by *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, individuals that have been secluded or restrained have experienced psychological trauma, physical harm, and fear. Being subjected to these practices has lead Ohio students to attempt suicide and withdrawal from school.

"We must ensure that our children are safe and that school officials are not resorting to unnecessary, punitive measures because they lack the time, patience, or training to effectively engage with students suffering from autism or other disabilities," Mayadev said. "Ohio educators and policymakers already understand the harm that can result from using seclusion and restraint. It's time to practice what we preach by reducing the use of force on children."

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio calls on the state and educators to immediately:

- Ban the use of seclusion in schools;
- Bar the use of restraint except in situations of extreme emergency;
- Mandate and engage in more comprehensive data collection on the use of seclusion and restraint and ensure that this data is made publically available;
- Implement interventions that award positive student behavior; and
- Provide comfort rooms in schools.

Read or download the full report at <http://www.cdfohio.org/research-library/seclusion-and-restraint-issue.html>. For more information, contact Naila Awan, Policy Fellow, or Renuka Mayadev, Executive Director, at Children's Defense Fund-Ohio.

###

The [Children's Defense Fund](#) Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.