

Major Step Forward in Improving Safety of Children in Schools With House passage of the Keeping All Students Safe Act, HR 4247

SILVER SPRING, MD (March 4, 2010) — AUCD applauds the passage of H.R. 4247 in the House of Representatives March 3, 2010, and urges the Senate to pass its version of the bill, S. 2860, quickly.

The bill, formerly the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act, would establish federal minimum standards for the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and assist in the prevention of these practices, which have resulted in the serious injury, emotional trauma and death of hundreds of children, with and without disabilities. Risk of injury and harm is significantly increased when seclusion and restraints are implemented by staff who are not sufficiently trained. There is an urgent need for Federal protection, allocation of resources and assistance to States to develop plans to reduce the use of these dangerous techniques. Currently, no federal guidelines exist regarding the use of restraints and seclusion.

“Passage of this bill is a significant step forward in protecting children and promoting the use of evidence-based techniques in crisis reduction, de-escalation and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports,” stated Tamar Heller, AUCD President and Director of the Institute on Disability and Human Development (Illinois UCEDD). “Research by many of our University Centers has shown Positive Behavioral Supports as an effective intervention for children with disruptive or challenging behaviors. The use of PBS reduces the need for aversive interventions such as restraint and seclusion. This is especially true if it is preceded by a functional behavioral assessment to determine the antecedents of the behavior.”

Evidence shows a disproportionate use of these techniques on students with disabilities, violating their right to nondiscrimination in accessing education. A majority of problem behaviors that are used to justify seclusion and restraint could be prevented with early identification and intensive early intervention. The need for seclusion and restraint procedures is, in part, a result of insufficient investment in prevention efforts.

Mary Elizabeth Bruder, Director of the Connecticut University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, stated, “The disability community in Connecticut, as well as nationwide, is grateful for Senator Dodd’s continuing leadership on issues critical to the wellbeing of children in our

schools, especially those children receiving special education. He truly recognizes the importance of evidence-based practices in schools for children with disabilities.”

The Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), located in Silver Spring, MD, promotes and supports a national network of interdisciplinary centers on disabilities. The members of AUCD represent every U.S. state and territory. AUCD and its members work to advance policy and practice through research, education, leadership, and services for and with individuals with developmental and other disabilities, their families, and communities. For more information, visit AUCD’s website: www.aucd.org.