February 7, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman, Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin:

On behalf of the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), I write to thank you for your leadership to protect the safety of our children in schools by introducing The Keeping All Students Safe Act today.

Restraint and seclusion in education are often unregulated and reportedly all too common for behaviors that do not pose danger or threat of harm. Evidence shows a disproportionate use of these techniques on students with disabilities, violating their right to nondiscrimination in accessing education. School personnel need training in the use of evidence-based techniques in crisis reduction and de-escalation, and the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Research by many of our University Centers has shown PBIS as an effective intervention for children with disruptive or challenging behaviors across a broad age range and spectrum of behaviors.

The Keeping All Students Safe Act addresses these problems by establishing 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 ensures that restraint and seclusion are used only in emergencies threatening physical safety and 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 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.

The AUCD applauds you for your leadership in authoring and promoting the Keeping All Students Safe Act. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Kim Musheno
Director of Legislative Affairs