



*Civil Rights and Human Dignity*

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Nikki Heidepriem, Chair  
*Heidepriem & Mager, Washington DC*

David B. Apatoff  
*Arnold & Porter, Washington DC*

Eileen A. Bazelon  
*Department of Psychiatry  
Medical College of Pennsylvania*

Robert A. Burt  
*Yale Law School*

**Jacqueline Dryfoos**  
New York NY

Kenneth R. Feinberg  
*The Feinberg Group, Washington DC*

Howard H. Goldman  
*Department of Psychiatry  
University of Maryland School of Medicine*

**Emily Hoffman**  
*On Our Own Maryland*

Jacki McKinney  
*National Association of People of Color  
Consumer/Survivor Network*

Martha L. Minow  
*Harvard Law School*

Stephen J. Morse  
*University of Pennsylvania Law School*

Joseph G. Perpich  
*JG Perpich LLC, Bethesda MD*

Paul Recer  
*Science and medical journalist  
Washington DC*

Rhonda Robinson-Beale, MD  
*United Behavioral Health*

Harvey Rosenthal  
*New York Association  
of Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services*

Elyn R. Saks  
*University of Southern California  
Gould School of Law*

W. Allen Schaffer, MD  
*Williston, VT*

Cynthia M. Stinger  
*Washington Group International*

Martin Tolchin  
*Journalist and author  
Washington DCs*

Sally Zinman  
*California Network of  
Mental Health Clients*

**HONORARY TRUSTEE**  
Miriam Bazelon Knox  
*Washington DC*

**TRUSTEES EMERITI**  
Mary Jane England  
*Regis College*

**TRUSTEES EMERITI**  
Mary Jane England  
*Regis College*

H. Rutherford Turnbull, III  
*Beach Center for Families and  
Disability, University of Kansas*

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Robert Bernstein

*Affiliations listed for informational purposes only*

December 9, 2009

The Honorable George Miller  
2205 Rayburn House Office Building  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law commends the introduction of the Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act, and we wish to convey our strong support of your efforts to ensure the passage of this critical legislation.

Research shows that restraint and seclusion practices are ineffective, often abusive, and potentially deadly. Use of these techniques is particularly prevalent among children with disabilities and mental health disorders. The Preventing Harmful Restraint and Seclusion in Schools Act recognizes and seeks to eliminate the dangers associated with restraint and seclusion practices and proposes, instead, the adoption of school-wide Positive Behavior Support (PBS); a proven alternative approach to supporting students who experience challenging behaviors in school settings.

School-wide PBS is an effective, evidence-based approach to promoting a learning-friendly school climate that is beneficial for students and school staff alike. School-wide PBS significantly reduces discipline problems and addresses the social and emotional needs of all students, while providing school personnel with the tools necessary to aid students who demonstrate frequent behavior problems. We share your goals of reducing unnecessary restraint and seclusion practices, improving school climate, and encouraging student success through the implementation of school-wide PBS.

We applaud you for championing legislation that condemns the inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion and promotes a safe, positive and effective approach to responding to the diverse challenges facing our nation's schools. We look forward to working with you and your staff to secure its swift enactment.

Sincerely,

Chris Koyanagi  
Policy Director