

Banning Isolation and Restraint in Schools

[House Bill 1479](#) / [Senate Bill 5559](#) seeks to eliminate the practice of isolation of students in schools. It also seeks to make the use of restraining students safer by eliminating both mechanical and chemical restraint in Washington schools. The use of isolation and restraint have shown no compelling evidence that Washington students benefit from these continued practices.

Restraint and isolation are supposed to be rare practices, but they are not

Isolation rooms, found within many of Washington's public schools and educational institutions, and restraining students must only be used when a student's behavior poses an "imminent likelihood of serious harm." However, isolation and restraint of students are commonly used as classroom management tools to induce compliance or otherwise punish or discipline students for non-compliant behavior, in violation of state law.



Isolation and Restraint in schools hurts our most vulnerable students

The overwhelming majority of students subject to restraint and isolation practices are elementary school (K-5) students. There are egregious disparities in the practices of restraint and isolation against Black students, multi-racial students, low-income students, unhoused students, students in foster care, and students with disabilities. Restraint and isolation are punitive and penal experiences for students and can have lasting harmful effects.

House Bill 1479 / Senate Bill 5559 will protect Washington students and equip schools and educators to better address student needs by:

- Prohibiting isolation of students, and prohibiting the use of mechanical and chemical restraint, by all public school employees and non-public agencies (NPA) operating special education programs for students with disabilities
- Prohibiting the construction of new isolation rooms, and removing or repurposing existing isolation rooms by January 1, 2024
- Ensuring that Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) do not include restraint as a planned behavior intervention.
- Clarifying the definitions for school staff of what isolation and restraint are
- Improving isolation and restraint data reporting requirements
- Ensuring that professional development and technical assistance is available to the school districts that need the most support

