

LIVES
IN THE
BALANCE

Lives in the Balance
**2025 Children's Mental Health
ADVOCACY CONFERENCE**

The Hidden Costs of the Restraint Industrial Complex

Ben Jones, J.D., Lives in the Balance



The Restraint Industrial Complex

- Restraint Training Companies offer paid certifications in physical restraint.
- Marketed as essential for safety but raise serious ethical and educational concerns.
- Normalizes coercion and diverts resources from humane interventions.



Commercialization of Crisis Intervention

Restraint training embedded in public and private education systems.

- Mandated in many states, especially in special education.
- Chicago Public Schools spent \$890K on QBS/Safety-Care (2022-2023).
- Schools in England spent an average of \$11,500 on de-escalation and restraint training.
- Crisis Prevention Institute earned \$100M in 9 months; valued near \$1B.



Risk Management vs. Child Development

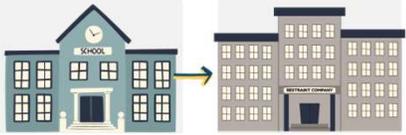


- Programs marketed as liability shields for schools.
- Emphasis on compliance and documentation.
- Neglects root causes of behavior and children's psychological needs.



Supported by Public Funds

Local: ~\$375B
State: ~\$380B
Federal: ~\$120B




Ethical and Safety Concerns



- **340,000+** uses of restraint and seclusion in **one year.**
- **83%** of uses on **students with disabilities.**
- Disproportionate impact on **students of color.**
- Practices **cause trauma** and **erode trust** in educators.



Ethical and Safety Concerns

Schools physically restrained or secluded students **more than five times per minute** of school.

Four out of five of those were used on **students with disabilities**.



Lack of Scientific Evidence, Unproven and Dangerous

- 6/6** major programs rated "Not able to be Rated" by national clearinghouse.
- 0** peer-reviewed safety trials.
- 79** restraint-related youth fatalities documented.



Financial Costs and Misplaced Priorities



- Costs include certification, travel, litigation, insurance, and staff turnover.
- Lawsuits and compliance orders can cost hundreds of thousands.



Financial Costs and Misplaced Priorities



- Funds could support:
 - Trauma-informed care
 - Mental health professionals
 - Problem-solving interventions



Unregulated Landscape, A Patchwork of Protections

- No federal regulation of restraint and seclusion in schools.
- Protections **vary wildly** by state.




Unregulated Landscape, A Patchwork of Protections

- In contrast:
 - Medicaid-funded hospitals must follow strict restraint protocols.
 - Students in schools lack basic rights afforded to child-patients.




Toward a **More Humane Future**

- The restraint training industry profits from systemic underinvestment.
- Reactive, punitive models must be replaced.
- Invest in empathy, skill-building, and inclusive practices.
- Affirm student dignity and safety.

A group of diverse young children of various ethnicities and ages, smiling and looking towards the camera. They are dressed in casual clothing.The logo for CMHAC, featuring a circular emblem with a dark blue background, a yellow star, and white waves. Below the emblem, the letters "CMHAC" are written in a bold, gold, sans-serif font.

Stay in touch: ben@livesinthebalance.org | livesinthebalance.org