

To the committee,

There is no independent advocate for children. The USA has an independent advocate for persons with disabilities that advocates for children with disabilities engaging with publicly funded services as a part of the the Disability Advocacy Program. you can find an example of such work here <https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/newsroom/disability-rights-pa-investigation-finds-abuse-neglect-and-discrimination-against-autistic-students-in-central-bucks-school-district/>. Australia has disability advocacy programs as well but no specific advocacy for children.

Advocacy for children is usually directed through the education department with no oversight or social workers with no oversight and school counsellors with no oversight. The problem with this system is that people act out of self interest where harming children is beneficial to educators. they have a tendency to incestuous self-protection, prioritizing professional relationships, maintaining employment within a school and that identifying issues conflicts with their obligations to not bring the profession into disrepute. this specific ill-conceived understanding of guild requirements to not bring the profession into disrepute is like a judge being required to prevent criminals being brought into disrepute. A recent inquiry into healthcare revealed that it was lawful for hospitals to discriminate on the basis that a health professional had reported criminal conduct of another health professional. This also exists in schools.

The way the system functions is to use framing to pigeonhole students being abused by teachers as over reacting or having a problem with authority. They have contracts requiring teachers not to report criminal conduct by following poorly conceived internal processes. These protections and safeguards against punishment for wrongdoing need to be ripped off like a dirty bandaid. Independent advocates for children need to be established. They need to be given legal protections and privileges to enter schools and conduct investigations into teacher conduct. prohibitions on schools policing their own teachers engaging in criminal conduct must be prohibited by law. Eliminating high-test conditions for enforcement actions and properly educating police about mental illness. The high test conditions often require 'a reasonable person' to experience harm which leads to authority figures abusing their authority to frame students being bullied by authority figures as being unreasonably upset or offended without any regard to the actual conduct. Interpretations of law by regulators are as absurd as proscribing in law that merely stating, "They're unreasonable" is a reasonable defence against any criminal allegation.

There are many poor excuses offered throughout the years as to why only guild members have the expertise to self-investigate. This would be like suggesting that tech companies should be exempt from law because only the company can know what is best for its customers.

A federally funded program for child advocacy, requirement for schools to post bills in public places and to accept school wide presentations from child advocates educating them on their rights and how to access advocacy when they are victims of child abuse. This is a particularly a priority as the age of criminal responsibility has lowered in some jurisdictions where the child's only recourse to such abuse is to stab or punch a teacher. Access to functional justice for children would at least provide an alternative avenue to legal recourse.

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