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**Working with UF Student Leader, Rep. Waldron Files
Parental Rights Bill to Protect Disabled Students from
Corporal Punishment**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Working with University of Florida student leader, Graham Bernstein, and his colleague, UF Alumnus Konstantin Nakov, **Representative Katherine Waldron (D-Greenacres)** has filed [House Bill 439](#) for the 2024 Legislative Session. This bill aims to address the disproportionate usage of school corporal punishment against students with disabilities.

Representative Waldron's sponsored bill will halt the usage of school corporal punishment against students with disabilities, require that parents of non-disabled children are asked to opt-in before their children can be corporally punished, and guarantee that only school principals administer school corporal punishment.

“This bill is an important step in providing parents with the ability to safeguard their children,” said **Representative Waldron**. “It isn’t the business of the government to stand in the way of parents when it comes to a topic so personal as the physical discipline of their child.”

Comprehensive research, public records requests and conversations with stakeholders demonstrate the disproportionate corporal punishment of students with disabilities: for example, while students covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are only 15% of Florida’s student body, they accounted for more than 22.3% of students corporally punished overall in recent years. Some counties had very large disparities, including Lafayette County, where 68% of students corporally punished were disabled. Other counties with a large disparity include Franklin County (43%); Jackson County (40%); Holmes County (22.5%); Gilchrist County (50%); Washington County (35%); Calhoun County (39%); Columbia County (28%); Union County (30%); Liberty County (20%). Additional research has cast doubt on the effectiveness of corporal punishment in general and identified that such punishment is often used for

minor reasons, like tardiness or dress code violations. Research also indicates corporal punishment is commonly used against the same students repeatedly, which can have detrimental long-term impacts on educational performance.

According to Bernstein, Director of Political Affairs for the Florida Student Policy Forum, “This bill continues Florida’s strong traditions of protecting disabled kids and safeguarding parental rights.”

In passing this bill, Florida would join the ranks of other states that still allow school corporal punishment but have taken actions to protect parental rights during the administration of it or restricted its usage against disabled students, such as Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Texas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Georgia, and Missouri.

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