

Dear editor,

As a psychologist, parenting counselor, and mother, I am deeply distressed to see that the Utah Senate is refusing to hear HB5, the critically important anti-restraint bill that can protect children from the dangerous, inhumane, and even life-threatening practice of holding "therapy" - and that was already passed 68-2 by the Utah House.

The use of forced holding will inevitably engender strong feelings of fear, confusion, helplessness, anger, and betrayal as the child's natural attempts to break free are coldly disregarded by those they have come to love and trust. The coerced child learns only to feign attached behavior, not to feel it inside. Such dissimulation is at the core of the sociopathic personality.

Gentle, empathic approaches are far less stressful for all concerned than forced holding, more effective over the long term, and more respectful of the child, who deserves above all our love, understanding, and compassion. How sad that something as lovely as having a child in our arms - when the desire is mutual - has been perverted into such a heartless practice.

Einstein once wrote that "Behind every difficulty lies an opportunity." Here is Utah's opportunity to show the rest of the country what it means to truly care for our children, and to protect them from abusive practices masquerading as therapy.

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