

Wanda M. Statement on *Ella T. v. State of California* Settlement

Good afternoon, I want to focus my statement today on school discipline practices and how they affect literacy learning for our children. If we talk about children being our future, then we have to make sure they get a proper education, and that it starts with literacy. To achieve this, we need to allow children to fully participate in the learning environments inside their classrooms.

As a parent, I feel that my son missed out on a lot of learning time due to in-school practices that were not effective for dealing with behavior issues. At my son's former school, when kids would get in trouble, a common response was to send them to an unsupervised detention area. I didn't feel like this was helpful for any of the students, including my son, because it pulled them away from their classroom work. Students were sent to detention with no books or assignments, which meant that they were in detention falling behind in their academics.

When a school's only response is to remove students from the classroom, and that is happening multiple times a week, how can you expect students to keep up with the curriculum or catch up once they have started to fall behind?

These issues are happening everywhere in the school system, at both charters and traditional schools. Our children deserve better, and that can only happen when every school develops practices that support our children's needs, rather than pushing them under the rug and into settings that further cause them to be at an academic disadvantage. Our schools need to develop structures so that the first response towards our children is not punishment. We are in desperate need of healthy learning environments, where our schools know how to teach our babies valuable life lessons. Teach them how to be better when they do something that was wrong, instead of always jumping immediately to calling our children bad.

I hope schools will use the money from this settlement to evaluate and work to meet our children's needs. Whether that's textbooks, time to work individually with teachers, identifying if a student is behind, academic support if they need it, extra adults in the class, and more training for teachers so that they can better assist students when they fall behind. We need this money to go towards those things that will benefit our children's everyday education, their everyday life. I am interested to see how the schools use these additional resources to implement better behavior practices instead of punishing our students. I also hope that the State's commitments in this settlement truly encourage schools to refrain from punishment-based discipline practices that are doing nothing for our babies.

Thank you to everyone who worked on this lawsuit, and thank you all today for listening.