



Supplementary Written Public Comments on the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED)

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**Note: Individuals sent several versions of this letter, some of which included additional comments.
Full, individual comments are available upon request.**

Email Campaign 1

I am writing to urge IACC to issue a public statement condemning 2021, [July 6th's reversal](#) of an FDA regulation that would have banned use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) for use in behavior modification at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center in Massachusetts. This device issues extremely painful skin shocks for the purposes of behavioral modification and has been named a device of torture by the United Nations. Importantly, the Judge Rotenberg Center houses students primarily disabled students of color from New York City, making the ban on the GED a pressing issue of disability and racial justice.

Urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center.

Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act.

I urge the leadership of IACC to stand against the use of this device at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center, a center that has been at the center of controversy for many years because of its continued use of this barbaric practice. We cannot profess to do the work of equity and remain neutral in the face of such violence. When can I expect a statement from IACC on this issue?

Sasha P.	Beatrice Augustine
Kerry Recht	Liz Franzone
Ariana Uriati	Mark Blokpoel, Ph.D.
Holly Manning	Rebecca Margolick
Quin Potter	Dan Schwartz
Veronica Poquette	Emily Sandford
Caden McIsaac	K.E. Eckerman
Magdalene Ho	Sandy Avrutin
Athithya Aravinthan	Kate Murphy
Ivan Corn	E. Gill
Vanessa Matelski	Alexandra Bance
Nicole Dannen	A. Héraud
Baker Kipping	Sherry Midi
Ulysse Bartolomey	Aminata Camara
Kristy Dodds	Frank Corso IV
Mirphy Harrison	Samantha Ayala
Sara Rocha	Sathya Siddapureddy
Sophie Hughes	Carolina Semedo
Emily Chicklis	Lydia Jung
Anish Krishna	Gareth Jones
Cypher Chu	Shoshana Levy

Mia Van
Sarah Maue
Ariana Martinez

Pheobe Timms
Ashley Hazim

Note: Individuals sent several versions of this letter, some of which included additional comments. Full, individual comments are available upon request.

Email Campaign 2

I am writing to urge you to demand that the FDA ban the use of the graduated electronic decelerator (GED) on individuals with disabilities.

The GED is a device that delivers a powerful and painful shock to wearers. The GED has been condemned by the United Nations as a weapon of torture against particularly vulnerable populations. The severely painful device is primarily used at the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) on autistic individuals who behave in ways that are deemed inappropriate by staff at the center. Behaviors that the JRC has used GED shock to discipline include but are not limited to: hand-flapping, standing, making noise, and screaming in pain from the administered shock. The GED has been known to burn skin and is traumatic for individuals exposed to the device.

Last year, the FDA successfully implemented regulations that banned the use of the GED on individuals with disabilities with the support of over 300,000 caring individuals. However, the JRC successfully lifted the ban in a lawsuit against the FDA. The unfortunate success of the lawsuit occurred because the FDA solely banned the use of the GED for behavior modification purposes. The court ruled that the FDA did not have authority to implement the regulation because the FDA did not completely ban the device overall.

I am therefore calling on you to support autistic individuals and people with cognitive disabilities by encouraging the FDA to produce a total ban against the GED. Your support is necessary to protect the well-being of vulnerable individuals residing in the JRC and susceptible to grueling abuse.

Urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center.

Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to keep me informed on your decision to act on this matter.

Hannah Judson

Kelly Stanton

Janine Briones

Kristin M. Paschall

Ella Ward

Ivy Schmid

William Spangler

Anne Sydor

Megan Denardo

Grecia Negra

Brianna Mau

Sarah Showich

Bashirat Oladele

Belle

Lydia Jung

Katie Krasinski

Sprite Minton

Miranda Jackel

Note: Individuals sent several versions of this letter, some of which included additional comments. Full, individual comments are available upon request.

Email Campaign 3

[“As a Massachusetts resident, I support Bill H.225, which if passed, will prevent the use of aversives, including the GED device, on disabled students.”]

I would also like you to push for an outright ban on the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) device. Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill’s prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act. The FDA previously banned the use of this device only in relation to behavior modification, which has just been overturned by the D.C. Circuit Court. The GED devices (GED-1, GED-3a, and GED-4) need to be outright banned as they serve no purpose other than to provide pain and therefore torture to the person receiving it.

The Judge Rotenberg Center tortures autistic people, people with intellectual disabilities, and people with mental illnesses with this shock device. They currently use the GED-3a and GED-4 devices. This GED-4 device gives out up to 90 mA current, nearly up to 3 times over the maximum current limit of the FDA. The GED-3a and GED-4 devices **are not approved by the FDA and never have been.**

The GED devices accidentally discharge, staff accidentally shock the wrong student, and the students are forced to wear these devices 24/7, including while bathing or showering, which has caused 2nd-degree burns due to malfunctioning in water.

The GED is abusive. Shocking autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities for not taking their coat off fast enough is abusive. This device should not be considered a medical device or a “treatment” in any way. This device is torture.

To learn more, please follow the [**#StopTheShock**](#) hashtag on twitter.

Please push the FDA to ban the GED device outright, and to prevent the restraint and abuse of all autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities in the US.

Urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center.

Here is a quote from Jennifer Msumba who went to the Judge Rotenberg Center describing the electric shocks that she endured: “It lasts 2 seconds but it feels like 10-15 seconds. The feeling is like this pulsing, pulling, yanking, burning sensation that they get in your arm, leg, whatever spot they shock you in. It doesn’t go through your whole body. It will just stay on that one spot where they shock you, but it will tear into it and your whole muscles will clench up and raise up, and you have no control over your muscle for that period of time. It’s a terrible pain. I have no idea how to describe it. They describe it as a bee sting, but some people will say it’s like a hundred bee stings, it’s not just like a little bee sting, it’s like a bunch of bee stings. Unless you’ve been tasered or something, or electrocuted by something, I

don't know how to describe the feeling. The pain is really bad." - Jennifer Msumba, from the Youtube video entitled "Escaping The Judge Rotenberg Center" - www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7hklHN-qqY

Tristen Koffink

Emma Fixmer

Karli Hayden

Ira Kraemer

Ryan Robinson

Shannon Cardinal

Stephannie Bethel

Nicholas Smith

Hayden Day

A C

Meghan Kelly

Maya Stringer

I want to express concern about the lack of attention to the events that the #StopTheShock hashtag is about. Autistic children are being tortured with devices producing electrical shocks stronger than a taser or cattle prod. Why are no major news networks talking about this?

LuAnn Brandsen

Please, please use your considerable influence to push to ban the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) device at the Judge Rotenberg Center. The GED is abusive and has been proven to cause considerable pain and long-lasting trauma. They currently use devices not approved by the FDA. The GED is abusive. Shocking autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities for things as simple as not removing their coat fast enough is abusive. This device should not be considered a medical device or a treatment of any kind. I urge the leadership of this committee to stand against the use of this device at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center, a center that has been at the center of controversy for many years because of its continued use of this barbaric practice. We cannot profess to do the work of equity and remain neutral in the face of such violence.

Leah Carpenter

I am writing in regards to electroshock being administered at JRC. This type of ?treatment? should never be acceptable to administer on a human. The autistic community is firmly against this practice and is appalled that people with disabilities continue to be degraded and injured at the hands of caretakers and professionals. Please listen to their voices.

Zoey Patterson

Please treat disabled people like people.

Amber White

The electric shock method used at the Judge Rothenburg Center needs to be eliminated immediately. This is abuse. They receive a shock worse than a shock used in a taser. It is teaching these humans NOTHING and is an absolute embarrassment for this country. This country does not stand for this, and to allow this abuse to take place is absolutely irrational.

Elisabeth Wood

Please stop the shock and support Kassa

Annika Andrews

STOP THE SHOCK

Pheobe Bingham

Please stopping the shocking of disabled children

Rachel Ruiz

The violence being committed at JRC is completely unethical and inexcusable. Stop shocking disabled people. This is discrimination in its harshest form.

Joanna Perrin

Shocking people is inhumane. As an autistic teenager, it is mortifying to see that you are harming people like me. We are autistic. There is nothing wrong with us. We simply have a different thought process. You are only burning us and giving us PTSD. There is no healing in shocking. You are merely suppressing our personalities for your own comfort. What is harmful about the way we act? What is harmful about our creativity, happy hands, need for comfort objects, and love for life? What is wrong with not speaking? Do you shock the deaf because they are unable to speak? Do you shock those with brain damage because they are unable to speak? It's a neurological process that not all people are capable of using at all times. It does not mean that we are animals if we are unable to speak. We understand what you say and can respond in ways that don't involve vocal chords. Are you shocked when you do not show "correct behavior?" I'm sure the answer is no. That is a privilege. Someone decided you were more worthy because you are capably of spontaneity, sarcasm, and suppressing your emotions. Do your research. Hear autistic people cry for you to stop shocking them. Notice your neurotypical privilege. You're only causing harm and it's simply for the comfort of neurotypicals. I'm disgusted.

Mia Childers

The Judge Rotenberg Centre is committing atrocious acts against disabled people, electrically shocking them at nearly lethal amounts which can severely damage tissue and nerves and cause 3rd degree burns. This should not be legal.

Joanna Blaiklock

The use of electric shock devices to "correct" or contain the behaviours of autistic students is abusive and inhumane. There is no justification for its use under any circumstances. All behaviour is communication. Autistic students need understanding and to be listened to, not hurt and abused. The ruling enabling the use of these devices must be over turned.

Jessica Gomes

I am a Portuguese Occupational Therapist. I've been reading about the permission to use GED device in disabled students. I think this is a crime against humanity. It's time for the science community to show us that we can do better, that we don't need to let disabled people suffering even more than they already do. It's time to show respect and provide the best possible health care to all human being.

Bailey McGuire

Stop the abuse of autistic and disabled people by ABA and electroshock therapy! This is inhumane and disgusting!

Charlotte Ros

Electroshock and other forms of “punishment” against autistic people for being themselves is beyond inhumane and a form of torture. Autistic people have a right to be themselves and a right to not be tortured. That these shock torture techniques are used in a school where the majority is Black and not white is not a coincidence but a clear case of racism.

Black autistic people are people and should be treated with respect and loving care, not with torture.
#StopTheShock

Rebecca Bahr

Please ban the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) device. The FDA previously banned the use of this device in relation to behavior modification, which has been overturned by the D.C. Circuit Court. The GED devices (GED-1, GED-3a, and GED-4) need to be banned. The Judge Rotenberg Center tortures autistic people, people with intellectual disabilities, and people with mental illnesses with this shock device.

Spencer Dykstra

Stop the shock! The use of Graduated Electronic Decelerators is inhumane and should be banned everywhere. Using these devices that could potentially cause lasting damage is insane.

Megan Smith

End the shocks performed on autistic individuals at JRC.

Kathryn DeBenedetto

Please ban the use of GED as it is torture and a violation of rights.

Brianna McCray

Stop the Shock

Rebecca Schiffman

please ban the us of the ged and close the jrc immediately. this is a violation of civil rights.

Sally Horowitz

stop the shocks!!!

Katharine Real

Please ban the GED shocking device that is used to torture neurodivergent (particularly autistic) individuals.

E Mulcahy

Ban all use of GED3 & GED4 which serve to do nothing but torture children & adults with disabilities whose behavior is communicating a need. Shame on the circuit appeals court for not upholding the banning of this practice. Certain school districts have disproportionate % of baker-acting & isolation of autistic students incl use of unacceptable restraint & zip-ties. Protect these children as if they were yours!

Kate Duvall

Please speak out against the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center's horrific abuse and dehumanization of autistic people and other disabled people. IT. MUST. END.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judge_Rotenberg_Educational_Center

Sue Fletcher-Watson, Ph.D.

I am writing to ask you to take whatever action is within your power to stop the inhumane treatment of autistic people and people with a learning disability at the Judge Rottenberg Centre. As a Chair in Developmental Psychology at University of Edinburgh I am appalled by observing that this evil behaviour is being permitted in a country that the entire world looks to as an example.

Algernon Lutwak

I'm writing to request that you recommend legislation regulating the use of aversives, particularly GEDs, starvation, physical restraint, and forced sensory stimulation, in the treatment of autistic patients. The recent JRC v FDA ruling represents an appalling miscarriage of justice, and it frightens me that I as an autistic person escaped violence and torture there through sheer luck.

While the research on ABA's efficacy, as shown by recent systemic review articles, is mixed, the question of its longterm psychological effects on victims, even in the absence of aversives, is less ambiguous. Its underlying principles, particularly behaviorism, have been more broadly disproven in psychology circles: only autistics are still considered inhuman enough to merit such "treatment."

I appreciate that it's the entrenched "gold standard" of autism treatment, and that that cannot be immediately altered. However, given that JRC representatives spoke at last year's ABAI conference and that no national ABA-based group has spoken out against the recent ruling, it's clear that greater regulation of violent and potentially lethal aversives in ABA therapy is called for.

Please show that you value our lives. Recommend passage of the Keeping All Students Safe Act with specific provisions regarding aversives and GED. Take whatever other measures lie within your power to promote autistic safety from those who would "treat" us with violence.

Caryn Downing

The GED device currently being used against children and adults at the Judge Rotenberg Center in MA must be banned. And then the ban must be enforced.

Jennifer Booth

I'm asking that IACC issue a public statement condemning the reversal of an FDA regulation that would have banned use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) for use in behavior modification at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center in Massachusetts. This device issues extremely painful skin shocks for the purposes of behavioral modification and has been named a device of torture by the United Nations. Importantly, the Judge Rotenberg Center houses students primarily disabled students of color from New York City, making the ban on the GED a pressing issue of disability and racial justice. As a social worker who works with individuals with disabilities, I am appalled that the ban was overturned and that these shocks still continue.

Urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center.

I urge the leadership of IACC to stand against the use of this device at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center, a center that has been at the center of controversy for many years because of its continued use of this barbaric practice. We cannot profess to do the work of equity and remain neutral in the face of such violence.

Alicia Westmacott

I am writing to please ask the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee to issue a public statement condemning the reversal of an FDA regulation that would have banned use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) for use in the behaviour modification at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center in Massachusetts that occurred on July 6th, 2021. The United Nations has named the GED a device of torture and the use of it on the Judge Rotenberg Center's students, many of them being under the age of eighteen, is a horrific violation of human rights. This is made even more depraved by the fact that these students are mostly disabled and members of racial minorities, many of them being autistic, meaning this is also disability and racial injustice.

Please, for the sake of the human rights and safety of children and adults alike, urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center. Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act.

Dana Berkowitz

I am writing to condemn the July 6th 2021 overturning of an FDA regulation that would have banned use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED). These devices deliver extremely painful shocks. The children who have to wear them because it's supposed to modify their behavior suffer additional pain beyond the shocks intentionally set on them by also getting shocked sometimes by mistake and getting burns because they have to wear them 24/7 even in the shower when water damages the device. They are used by the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center in Massachusetts whose students are mostly of color adding to the facts of abusing children that there is not only disability injustice but also racial justice.

We don't even use collars like these on criminals and yet this torture is doled out to children who are struggling against the very way their brain is wired and even behaving sometimes the way neurotypical children do like not being able to sit still. In one case, a teenage student was shocked 31 times for not wanting to take his coat off.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that this "treatment" actually works to modify the students' behavior. Quite the contrary, children who suffer this barbaric practice are more likely to develop PTSD, further destabilizing their ability to regulate their emotions and behavior.

Urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center.
Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act.

We cannot stand by while innocent children are tortured.

Nicole Caccitolo

Use of a shock system on our most vulnerable population is unacceptable, cruel and unusual in light of the fact that it is illegal to use on animals. Please do not move forward in the state of Massachusetts with legislation that supports this kind of treatment to Americans who need a voice not punishment.

Debbie Kuhl

As the parent to a wonderful autistic child, I try to be aware of the challenges she faces in the world. There are no shortages of able-ist things she'll find and we try to prepare her for it as best we can.

So I was appalled to see the court ruling allowing the Judge Rotenberg Center to continue torturing children with punitive electric shock devices. I understand that figuring out how to teach special needs students is an ongoing challenge, but one of the methods shouldn't be literally to torture them into behaving.

Please keep our students safe and work to end this practice.

Brad Greenberg

The use of shock therapy or shock collars on children is absolutely unacceptable. This is child abuse. It doesn't matter what learning or developmental issues they have, this sort of behavior should not be tolerated.

Alice Barnes

Please do all that is in your power to stop the use of electric shock devices at the Judge Rotenburg Centre, including releasing a public statement as well as other advocacy. This is necessary to protect the vulnerable students there from harm, and I know that your committee will want to do all they can to protect these individuals. Thanks for your prompt attention to this matter.

Rebecca Hall

I am writing to urge the IACC to issue a public statement condemning the 2021, July 6th's reversal of an FDA regulation that would have banned use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) for use in behavior modification at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center in Massachusetts. This device issues extremely painful skin shocks for the purposes of behavioral modification and has been named a device of torture by the United Nations. Importantly, the Judge Rotenberg Center houses students primarily disabled students of color from New York City, making the ban on the GED a pressing issue of disability and racial justice.

Urge the legislature to cut the funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center.

Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act.

I urge the leadership of IACC to stand against the use of this device at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center, a center that has been at the center of controversy for many years because of its continued use of this barbaric practice. We cannot profess to do the work of equity and remain neutral in the face of such violence.

Sharon Fitzgerald

As a Parent of a child on the spectrum fighting her own battle against discrimination and abuse. I am standing with these abused citizens, all the way from Ireland. It is deplorable to read that this archaic and animalistic behaviour goes on in schools and care centres in what is supposed to be the most forward thinking, free and advanced country in the modern world.

Nidia Silva

I'm writing to you to bring attention to what's happening at the Judge Rotenberg Center, this center is using GEDs (Graduated Electronic Decelerator), this is inhumane, the use of this device shows the slack of comprehension and the lack of care for disabled and autistic people/ people with autism and it causes significant harm to this community. I'm asking you to take this serious and urgently seek to ban these devices, and instead that disabled/ autistic people/ people with autism are treated decently!

Stella Waterhouse

This so called "treatment" shames the USA.

JRC masquerades as an Educational establishment but is simply abusive - although it's founder, cleverly, has managed to portray it as "necessary. It is not.

If such treatment was used on prisoners or even animals it would be condemned as abuse.

There is no justification for it all and there are many other humane ways of helping alleviate some of the most difficult behaviours associated with autism, Tourette Syndrome etc.

Noud Rooijakkers

About 8 days ago, the use of GED's, devices used to deliver very powerful electric shocks, has been made legal in Massachusetts to be used at the Judge Rotenberg Center on autistic people and people with developmental, emotional or other mental disabilities. Many of the people this device is used on, are children. The GED has already caused the deaths of some students at the JRC. There have been 6 reported deaths at the JRC, most of which are a direct result from electric shocks being delivered to their bodies. There is also estimated to be even more deaths that the JRC tried to cover up. The GED's shocks are so strong that if they don't kill the person who is on the receiving end of these shocks, can get third degree burns on their body, and the trauma it brings with it is no joke either. The JRC will claim they barely ever shock their students but survivors from the JRC tell a whole different story. And the reasons they shock their students are also absurd. People have been reported to receive shocks for not taking off their coats, wrapping their feet around the leg of a chair, swearing, flapping their hands, and much more. Often, the JRC doesn't even tell the students why they were being shocked, which defeats the whole point of the shocks, since the shocks are supposed to teach the student something. But how can they learn to do or not to do something if they're not being told what they were being punished for? This is straight up torture. I, and many others, would really appreciate it if something could be done about this, primarily getting the GED's banned would be a huge step in the right direction. Please don't allow this to continue any longer. Thanks in advance.

Hazel Catton

I think it's absolutely disgusting I feel so sick, scared, shocked to think these children young adults are being shocked to help with autism I really hope they stop it as I'm a parent of autistic children THERE is NO need to shock medication is another I am sick to my stomach to think of all the pain which is inflicted on the people GOT TO STOP what about human rights cus that's abuses neglect not right at all User

Lisa Graf

Please restore the ban on adverives put in place by the FDA.

Kelly Wagner

Please put your voices to good use and push for the Judge Rotenberg Center in Canton, Massachusetts to be permanently shut down.

The Judge Rotenberg Center has engaged in abusive practices since its founding, including severely restricting calories as punishment, painful sensory exposure, and excessive use of restraints. Physically beating and pinching residents more or less ended with the development of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator - a full-body shock harness that can deliver enough electrical current to cause burns. People have died at this facility as a result of repeated electrical shocks, sometimes delivered while the subject was in restraints (and therefore incapable of harming self or others).

We have reached a point in autism research where we know, definitively, that these kinds of aversive therapies do nothing to help the people subjected to them, and instead cause further trauma. If this "therapy" genuinely saves lives, where are the autistic voices praising it for saving them? Where are the voices of residents and former residents asking for the program to continue?

Please join autistic people, disability rights activists, families, and professionals who are calling for autistic and intellectually disabled people to be treated like human beings. #StopTheShock

Alex McEwin

Please stop the shock. Please redirect to human centred care that respects the autonomy of autistic children. Please fund trauma informed care that addresses the horrors that attempting to reprogram a neurodivergent person's brain causes.

Mailani McKelvy

I am writing to ask you to commit to stopping the inhumane treatment of autistic people and people with a learning disability at the Judge Rotenberg Center. As an autistic person myself, I am appalled at the inhumanity of overturning the ban on electric shock devices. This is in NO way acceptable for any human being, in any setting, let alone one that is supposed to be educational.

Christine Shen

It is unacceptable to shock autistic people at the JRC. Please stop these harmful actions.

Arabella Sterwerf

Please #StopTheShock and #ShutDownTheJRC! GED is literally torturing Disabled people like Autistic people. This is absolutely disgusting! Please shut down the JRC and ban GED's from being used again. Unless you all want to be associated with torturing Disabled people, I definitely recommend banning GED and shutting down the JRC.

Chris Richards

I can't believe this is even being debated!!

Note: Profanity has been redacted from this document

Ella Norris

The [profanity redacted] happening at the Judge Rotenburg Educational Center is disgusting. We are people. Are not a dogs or lab rats. We should be treated like people, not electrocuted into behaving. The FDA agrees they aren't effective, and the UN says it's torture. One kid was literally electrocuted for not removing his jacket.

Please support #stoptheshock This is a gross mistreatment of disabled people, and we need to protect each other.

Katherine Packard

I am commenting to request that IACC puts serious consideration into taking action against the judge rotenberg center's continued ability to use electronic skin shock for behavior modification following the FDA ban being overturned.

This center is arguably the biggest threat to those with ASD and they need to be held accountable.

Taryn Hamlyn

Publicly Oppose and condemn the Judge Rotenburg Center for their use of shock devices and other torture tactics that they are inflicting on children and adults with developmental disabilities, many of whom are people of colour.

Jennifer Krencisz

The JRC in Massachusetts should NOT be allowed to SHOCK people with the GED device!! The FDA has every right and should reserve every right to step in. There has been no governing medical body to step in and protect disabled lives nor the lives of BIPOC and minorities who are marginalized and currently at the highest risk of exploitation and abuse. This must be stopped!

Katherine Schneider

Portland, OR

I am the parent of an autistic individual and horrified at the recent developments regarding the use of the GED 4 shock device at the Judge Rotenberg Center in Massachusetts.

Non-verbal autistic people and other disabled individuals should not be subject to torture. There is no justification for using this kind of aversive therapy in this day and age.

Please stand up for these individuals who need well-trained staff and intensive supports (including communications devices), not more pain and anxiety.

I would like to know the steps your committee is planning to take to protect these individuals.

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/07/07/metro/court-decision-allows-canton-school-continue-using-electric-shocks-residents-with-intellectual-disabilities/>

Denis Robert

ABA is a form of therapy based on disproven scientific principles, on methods of training originally developed for animals. How is the electro-shock “therapy” being administered on children against their will any different than cattle prods?

But more importantly, it reduces the individual to behaviors and their impact on others. The autistic individual’s ability to not bother neurotypicals is what seems to matter, not that health and welfare of the child. The “treatment” amounts to torture under International Law, and for what purpose? Making well adjusted robots that don’t throw tantrums?

The fact that ABA has the same history (with many of the same people), and the same results as Gay “reparation” Therapy should give pause.

It needs to end.

Stop cattle prodding children. #StopTheShock.

Kim Vana

The volts on the devices used at the JRC have a maximum amperage of 90 mA, which is only 10 mA less than the potentially lethal amount (100 mA).

This is a problem that needs to be addressed. People who are powerless and trapped in a corrupt system are nearly being killed for the sake of "curing autism". Something that can't and doesn't need to be cured.

We implore you to speak up about this. This is not a political or overexaggerated issue. Disabled humans are being treated even worse than circus animals. It's an issue of humanity and autonomy.

Please, will you do the correct thing and help end torture in Massachusetts?

Meta B.

Writing from outside the US, but I hope my experience can provide some insight to think about.

As an autistic adult myself, I've spent a large part of my childhood growing up in institutions for autistic children.

And in my own experience, it hasn't been a good place growing up.

Being a very shy kid, I would only use spoken language around my parents, and not in school or institution due to lack of confidence and trust.

Starting from my early teen years:

Because of the, back then, lack of understanding of autism from both my parents side, as well as from "autism experts" and teachers and caretakers, and the lack of good resources that goes with that, my parents couldn't help me when I told them time and time again that I was very unhappy in my current school. Because I was already going in a special school for autistic kids. But I was the only kid there who couldn't communicate or take care of my own needs, among my other classmates who could do that just fine. And the teachers just didn't know how to treat me in a respectful way, and help me grow in a way that suited me.

The same story repeated when I started to grow very unhappy with my institution during my mid teen years.

Up until my very late teens, I could voice my opinion, but my words were not taken serious. I simply did not get to have a say in any final decisions others made over important aspects of my life. That life never felt like it belonged to me.

People simply didn't know the importance in consulting me about my own life.

Our own government just couldn't help us, and once suggested my parents to put me in a youth prison for young men, out of sheer ignorance for what autism is even about.

Needless to say, my parents declined that offer right away.

Over the course of my mid to late teens, things started to escalated for the worse, but what finally changed my life for the better was both the understanding and compassion from my parents, as well as the flexibility of alternative resources to suit my needs better, when I was finally pulled out of the school system and the institution altogether, to live full time at my parents until they found me another place.

Two things that contributed to this lack of regard for my well-being while growing up, is the lack of active involvement from actually autistic adults in the research field over our own lives.

We are often observed from an outside perspective, and are given very little opportunity to provide our own insights, in a field that we are really the true experts.

The other thing is not taking the words of children serious, when they say that something is not right, or they come forward to say they are in distress or being abused one way or another.

What we need is focus on creating resources that first and foremost focus on the needs and quality of life for all autistic people, and ensure we have the tools to learn and grow and live in ways that best suits us.

Resources that can be flexible. Resources that can suits us in different stages of our lives, and different levels of support needs.

Astrid Cho

I would also like you to push for an outright ban on the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) device. Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act.

Laquisa Sprewell

Ruling that it's okay to shock disabled people is absolutely disgusting. This should never be something anyone resorts to. Disabled people deserve to be treated like the human beings they are. Stop this inhumane "treatment" immediately. This should never have been implemented in the first place

Fionnuala Larkin

I am writing in the hope of giving support to the movement to ban the use of electric shocks in interventions for autistic individuals. I am a clinical psychologist experienced in the field of autism and intellectual disabilities, and an active researcher. I am well aware of arguments and justifications for using aversive techniques to reduce harmful behaviours in autism. However, taking psychological theory, research evidence, clinical experience and ethical considerations into account, it is absolutely clear that aversive techniques of this kind should not be in practice anymore. While fear and pain can bring about compliance, this is at the expense of the safe, therapeutic spaces that all individuals need in order to develop and grow. Silence is not the same as tranquility: an individual may be shocked into submission without learning or developing in any meaningful way, and the process will be detrimental to their ability to develop the safe, trusting relationships that can be therapeutic. Contemporary thinking in supporting individuals with challenging behaviours emphasises the need to create safe, low-stimulation environments that are adapted to the sensory needs of the individual, with well-supported and supervised staff and caregivers. This is vital to protect the human rights of all the individuals we support. I would strongly urge that the ban on these devices be reinstated, and for schools and other institutions using these to be supported to develop more modern and humane approaches to supporting individuals with behaviours that challenge.

Marie Triant, M.S. CCC-SLP

My name is Marie Triant. I am a Speech-Language Pathologist working with children and adults between the ages of 2-23 years old in the North Shore area of Massachusetts. Many of these individuals with whom I work have autism diagnoses, intellectual disabilities, or developmental disorders.

I'm writing to ask you to support the Keeping All Students Safe Act (H.R.3474). This bill would ban restraint and seclusion, two life-threatening practices that disproportionately impact students with disabilities. Ending the use of restraint and seclusion would save lives, prevent abuse, and make our centers, clinics, and schools safer for the neurodivergent (having a neurologic diagnosis such as Autism, ADHD, Tourette's, etc.) and disabled populations.

Here is a link to the PDF of this Act: <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2021-05-26%20Keeping%20All%20Students%20Safe%20Act%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Currently, graduated electronic decelerators (GEDs) are used in Massachusetts at the Judge Rotenberg Center (JRC) in Canton, MA, by staff implementing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). The volts on the devices used at the JRC have a maximum amperage of 90 mA, which is only 10 mA less than the potentially lethal amount (100 mA).

This practice is illegal for abled neurotypical (those without neurologic diagnoses) children and adults, as well as pets and zoo animals. However, it is legal for children and adults who have intellectual disabilities, developmental disabilities, and who are autistic.

Here are some more resources to aid in awareness of how ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) is harmful to those with disabilities and autistic individuals.

<https://neuroclastic.com/2019/07/17/shocking-truth-about-aba/>

<https://autisticscienceperson.com/why-aba-therapy-is-harmful-to-autistic-people/>

https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-13-8437-0_14

Thank you in advance for your support in fighting for disability rights!

Claudia Judson

It is illegal to use shock therapy to punish neurotypical people, pets, and zoo animals, but legal to do the same to disabled people. How is this just? Ban the use of shock therapy and close down the Judge Rotenberg Center!

Siti Jasmin

#stoptheshock

Eliah Kagan

In 2020, the FDA banned the graduated electronic decelerator (GED).[1][2] This is a device used to punish residents of the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center (JRC) in Canton, Massachusetts, many of whom are autistic, with extremely painful electric shocks in an attempt to control their behavior.[3][4] Earlier this month, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the ban.[5][6] Please do all you can to end this practice and to protect people, including autistic people, from being punished with electric shocks.

The GED is torture; its use constitutes a violation of international standards including the U.N. Convention against Torture, according to U.N. Special Rapporteur on torture Juan E. Méndez's official report.[7] It is often used together with punitive seclusion, restraint, and the withholding of food to the point of undernourishment.[4]

The JRC has sometimes claimed only to shock residents to stop self-injurious and aggressive behavior. That is inaccurate. Examples of behaviors retaliated against with electric shocks include taking off a coat and screaming in pain from being shocked.[8][9] Furthermore, this is torture, not treatment, and it would be unacceptable even if it were only used in response to dangerous behavior (which it is not). Expert consensus (including behaviorists) has long been that electric shock punishments are always harmful, ineffective, and unjustifiable; see [10] and 'Critique of aversive treatment from research and policy' (and references therein) in [4].

There has been some media focus on residents who have been repeatedly shocked by the GED in a single session.[11][12][13] The culture surrounding the GED is one of careless willingness to inflict terrible pain on helpless people; in one case, staff inflicted numerous shocks on a resident when instructed to do so by a prank caller.[14][15] The founder and former head of the JRC resigned pursuant to a criminal plea agreement, after destroying evidence of abuse.[16][17] But the abusive practices continue.

Some of the worst uses of the GED are routine and not the result of any accident. A number of former residents of the JRC who have been subjected to the GED have spoken out against its use. For example, this is a former resident's description of 'behavioral rehearsal lessons' (BRLs) when interviewed by Disability Rights International (see [4], p.18-19, which are the 28-29th pages of the PDF document, and references therein, which confirm this practice, including a report by the New York State Department of Education):

?The worst thing ever was the BRLs. They try and make you do a bad behavior and then they punish you. The first time I had a BRL, two guys came in the room and grabbed me ? I had no idea what was going on. They held a knife to my throat and I started to scream and I got shocked. I had BRL's three times a week for stuff I didn't even do. It went on for about six months or more. I was in a constant state of paranoia and fear. I never knew if a door opened if I would get one. It was more stress than I could ever imagine. Horror.?

See also accounts by Jennifer Msumba of the extreme toll the GED took on her.[18][19][20] She was so anxious and terrified, on a constant basis.? [19] She was shocked for behaviors such as fidgeting and wiping cream cheese off a piano bench (because she was prohibited from 'manipulating objects').[20]

It is my hope that the experience and resourcefulness of the IACC will be brought to bear to protect everyone, including autistic people and people with other disabilities or mental illness, from ever being subjected to torturous electric-shock punishments. In the recent D.C. Circuit Court decision that overturned the FDA's ban on the GED, the court ruled not that the FDA's justification for the ban was in any way deficient, but rather that the FDA has the power to ban a device altogether but not to ban a device only for particular purposes.[21][22][23] The FDA had left open the possibility of someone voluntarily self-administering electric shocks with the GED or a similar device, for such purposes as smoking cessation. Given what is at stake, for the ban to be limited in that or any way is unnecessary, and the FDA can, and should, ban the GED completely. I urge the Committee to advise the FDA to pursue that course of action (as well as to challenge the ruling by petitioning for an en banc rehearing and/or appealing to the Supreme Court). But more broadly I ask that the Committee do all it can to stop the abusive and harmful practice of punishing people, including autistic people, with painful electric shocks.

The following are links to the sources referenced above in numbered citations:

- [1] <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2020/03/schools-can-no-longer-use-electric-shock-devices-on-students-says-the-fda/>
- [2] <https://autisticadvocacy.org/2020/03/asan-welcomes-ban-of-electric-shock-torture/>
- [3] <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/08/school-shock/>
- [4] <https://www.driadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/USReportandUrgentAppeal.pdf>
- [5] <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/07/07.metro/court-decision-allows-canton-school-continue-using-electric-shocks-residents-with-intellectual-disabilities/>
- [6] <https://autisticadvocacy.org/2021/07/asan-denounces-court-ruling-on-electric-skin-shock/>
- [7] https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session22/A-HRC-22-53-Add4_EFS.pdf, pp. 84-95 [8] <https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/stop-the-shock-fact-sheet-2019.pdf>
- [9] <https://autistichoya.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/nysed-2006-report.pdf>, pp. 13-14 [10] <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/08/experts-self-injurious-kids-challenge-dr-israels-methods/>
- [11] <http://nymag.com/news/features/andre-mccollins-rotenberg-center-2012-9/>
- [12] <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2012/04/video-child-being-shocked-rotenberg-school-autism>
- [13] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/12/judge-rotenberg-center-trial_n_1420633.html
- [14] <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/12/rotenberg-center-blasted-gov-eliot-spitzer-and-media-after-prankster-gets-employees-acc/>
- [15] <https://web.archive.org/web/20090103005930/http://www.arcmass.org/Portals/0/DEEC%20JRC%20report%2011-1-07.pdf>
- [16] <https://www.wbur.org/news/2011/05/26/rotenberg>
- [17] <https://autisticadvocacy.org/2014/08/prisoners-of-the-apparatus/>
- [18] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7hkIHN-qqY>
- [19] <https://www.tiktok.com/@jennifermsumba/video/6984924294845402374>
- [20] <https://www.tiktok.com/@jennifermsumba/video/6985553324292541702>
- [21] <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/autism-shock-therapy-trump-biden-b1885595.html>
- [22] <https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/court-overturns-fda-ban-on-electric-shock-device-used-on-special-needs-students/>
- [23] [https://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/C32A7577ED02127D8525870A00555511/\\$file/20-1087-1905079.pdf](https://www.cadc.uscourts.gov/internet/opinions.nsf/C32A7577ED02127D8525870A00555511/$file/20-1087-1905079.pdf)

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Ariana Martinez

I am writing to urge the IACC to condemn July 6th's reversal of an FDA regulation that would have banned use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) for use in behavior modification at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center in Massachusetts. This device issues extremely painful skin shocks for the purposes of behavioral modification and has been named a device of torture by the United Nations. Importantly, the Judge Rotenberg Center houses students primarily disabled students of color from New York City, making the ban on the GED a pressing issue of disability and racial justice.

Urge the IACC to take steps to recommend the withdrawal of state and national funding of the Judge Rotenberg Center, specifically, and to condemn the use of harmful aversive tactics like the GED, and practices of seclusion and restraint in institutional settings. Moreover, I urge the IACC to vocally advocate for home and community care options that respond to disabled self-advocates? calls for supports that appropriately meet their needs.

These issues are personal to me and my community. My mother teaches developmentally disabled students, primarily students of color, in New York City's District 75 schools. Her students are those with high support needs and are precisely the kinds of students most vulnerable to the kinds of abuses perpetuated by facilities like the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center. In an increasingly cruel and overtaxed system, her work is to advocate for these students, to ensure that they are never subject to the kinds of physical and emotional trauma that come from the use of seclusion, restraint, and pain-inflicting devices like the GED. Disabled students must have their humanity recognized and their bodily autonomy respected. Anything short of that is a systemic failure to meet the needs of this vulnerable population.

Jessica Hoffman

The process of using electric shocks on disabled people at the JRC is nothing short of torture. Autistic people are not broken or in need of a cure; we are in need of support. Using tactics like this to force us into behaviors more pleasing to neurotypical people is not support. It is torture, plain and simple. This horrific "treatment" method should be immediately stopped and banned in any application, situation, circumstance, etc. There is absolutely no excuse for torturing disabled people, and allowing it to continue is a shameful violation of human rights.

Katie Harrell

Please push for an outright ban on the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) device. Please include an amendment in the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) that would expand the bill's prohibitions to include aversive interventions and pass this Act. The FDA previously banned the use of this device only in relation to behavior modification, which has just been overturned by the D.C. Circuit Court. The GED devices (GED-1, GED-3a, and GED-4) need to be outright banned as they serve no purpose other than to provide pain and therefore torture to the person receiving it.

The Judge Rotenberg Center tortures autistic people, people with intellectual disabilities, and people with mental illnesses with this shock device. They currently use the GED-3a and GED-4 devices. This GED-4 device gives out up to 90 mA current, nearly up to 3 times over the maximum current limit of the FDA. The GED-3a and GED-4 devices are not approved by the FDA and never have been.

The GED devices accidentally discharge, staff accidentally shock the wrong student, and the students are forced to wear these devices 24/7, including while bathing or showering, which has caused 2nd-degree burns due to malfunctioning in water.

The GED is abusive. Shocking autistic people and people with intellectual disabilities for not taking their coat off fast enough is abusive. This device should not be considered a medical device or a 'treatment' in any way. This device is torture.

To learn more, please follow the #StopTheShock hashtag on twitter.

Anna Lyons

I urge you to stand against the use of the Graduated Electronic Decelerator (GED) at the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center, a center that has been criticised for many years because of its continued use of this barbaric practice.

It is inhumane to torture Autistic people in this way and the fact that this is legal says a lot about how neurodivergent people are viewed in the USA.

Aubrey Bailey

Stop the shock

Bianca Chang'a

#stoptheshock

These people who are being shocked, they are disabled. They cannot control THEYRE disability and shocking them will not help. It is illegal for shocking to be used on animals sich. As dogs, cats, pet animals but it is legal to do so on humans??!!! This is screaming unbearable pain. And they get punished and shocked for screaming from a shock?? What?! Put yourself in the shoes of these disabled people. They are still people, they are still humans, they feel pain. This can lead to suicide, depression and anxiety , and SO many other horrible things . PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE HELP THEM PLEASE HELP THEM PLEASE . I BEG YOU!!!! PLEASE. They're so in danger, so in need of help. Please.

Leah Samuels

STOP THE SHOCK !

Douglas Bass

I wish for the FDA to appeal the decision by the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, overturning the ban on the use of electric shock devices on autistic clients of the Judge Rotenburg Center. These devices should not be allowed to exist, much less be used.

Saranna Namugenyi

What is being done is extremely disgusting and inhumane. This world is very horrific, and we can not go on a moment longer knowing that this is ongoing. The idiots responsible for this need to face serious consequences, and we need justice for any victims of this horrific situation.

Nicole Corrado

Please reinstate the ban on using shocks and other aversives against persons with disabilities. I am autistic.