

## Jaded teacher and single-mom join forces in uplifting tale of female empowerment

Written by Kam Williams, Film Review

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In 2010, California passed the nation's first "Parent Trigger Law," a bill which enables a neighborhood with an underperforming public school to fire the principal, replace the staff and convert it to a charter, provided a majority of the parents with students attending it sign a petition. The legislation has proved very controversial thus far, with opponents alleging that the measure is merely anti-union, whereas the sponsors call it an overdue reform intended to give kids stuck in so-called "dropout factories" a fair chance.

Consequently, *Won't Back Down* is opening under a cloud of controversy, which is unfortunate since the film is otherwise a quite engaging and entertaining tale of female empowerment. The reason why the picture has generated so much suspicion is that it was produced by Walden Media, the same studio that just a couple of years ago released

*Waiting for Superman*

, an incendiary documentary that came under attack for blaming teachers' unions for the broken educational system.

Although based on actual events that transpired in Los Angeles, *Won't Back Down* is set in the City of Pittsburgh, where we find an exasperated Jamie Fitzpatrick (Maggie Gyllenhaal) struggling to just to survive. Between selling used cars by day and bartending at night, the single-mom barely has any energy left to attend to the academic needs of her dyslexic daughter, Malia (Emily Alyn Lind).

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