



Civil Rights and Human Dignity

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Nikki Heidepriem, *Chair*
Heidepriem & Mager
Washington DC

David B. Apatoff
Arnold & Porter, Washington DC

Eileen A. Bazelon, MD
Department of Psychiatry
Drexel University

Rhonda Robinson-Beale, MD
Pacific Care Behavioral Health

Robert A. Burt
Yale Law School

Jacqueline Dryfoos
New York NY

Kenneth R. Feinberg
The Feinberg Group
Washington DC

Howard H. Goldman, MD
Department of Psychiatry, University
of Maryland School of Medicine

Emily Hoffman
On Our Own Maryland

Jacki McKinney
National People of Color
Consumer/Survivor Network

Martha L. Minow
Harvard Law School

Stephen J. Morse
University of Pennsylvania
Law School

Joseph G. Perpich
JG Perpich LLC, Bethesda MD

Paul Recer
Science and medical journalist
Washington DC

Harvey Rosenthal
New York Association of
Psychiatric Rehabilitation Services

Elyn R. Saks
University of Southern California
Gould School of Law

W. Allen Schaffer, MD
Williston, VT

Cynthia M. Stinger
Washington Group International

Martin Tolchin
Senior Publisher & Editor,
THE POLITICO

Sally Zinman
Mental Health Consultant,
Berkeley CA

TRUSTEES EMERITI

Mary Jane England, MD
Regis College

H. Rutherford Turnbull, III
Beach Center for Families and
Disability, University of Kansas

HONORARY TRUSTEE

Miriam Bazelon Knox
Washington DC

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Robert Bernstein, PhD

Affiliations listed for information only

April 23, 2008

The Honorable George Miller
United States House of Representatives
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law—the leading national legal-advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of children and adults with mental disabilities—would like to offer our support for your legislative efforts to regulate through federal oversight and enforcement, such residential facilities highlighted in the General Accounting Report (GAO) entitled, “Residential Treatment Programs: Concerns Regarding Abuse and Death in Certain Programs for Troubled Youth.”

As you well know, the GAO found thousands of cases where such facilities have failed children and their families by providing unsafe and unhealthy “therapeutic” environments leading to grave physical and psychological abuse, including death. Many families in crisis, with little information on where to turn for their troubled youth, have become victim to this largely unregulated industry. Additionally, these restrictive settings have little evidence of effectiveness when other community-based alternatives exist that produce better short and long term results for children with mental health needs. Protecting vulnerable children and ensuring they receive proper treatment is paramount to helping address our nation’s mental health crisis.

We applaud you for taking action and commend your leadership on this important issue. We look forward to working with you throughout the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Laurel Stine, J.D.
Director of Federal Relations