

**NATIONAL
CHILD ABUSE
COALITION**

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April 24, 2008

The Honorable George Miller
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor
2181 Rayburn Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller,

On behalf of the National Child Abuse Coalition, I am writing to express our support for your legislation, H.R. 5876, the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2008, aimed at preventing the abuse and neglect of children and young people in residential treatment programs in the United States. We applaud your commitment to protecting children by focusing attention on the deaths of young people at residential treatment facilities and the allegations of abuse reported at these programs over the years.

While residential treatment facilities designed to help children with extreme behavioral problems, including substance abuse and mental health problems, may provide safe and effective services to children and their families, many exist without any state monitoring or regulation. It is at these unregulated programs where children and young people have suffered, as disclosed at the hearings conducted by your committee, from serious maltreatment, the improper use of physical restraints and deprivations of basic necessities. While day care facilities, nursing homes, and hospitals are required to meet state operational standards, many residential treatment programs, which care for and house some of our nation's most vulnerable youth, remain largely unmonitored by any state or federal regulatory bodies.

We believe that legislation is needed to ensure children's safety in all such programs. We share your belief that Congress has an obligation to ensure that children are safe when they are entrusted to the care of a residential treatment program. Residential facilities treating and caring for children should not be exempt from state licensure and state regulation or inspection. We welcome the opportunity to work with you and your committee members toward the enactment of meaningful legislation to protect America's children from harm and to ensure the safety of all children in care. Again, we salute your leadership and your dedicated commitment to protecting children.

Sincerely,

Thomas L. Birch
Legislative Counsel

Member Organizations: Alliance for Children and Families, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Bar Association, American Humane Association, American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, American Psychological Association, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, CHILD Inc., Child Welfare League of America, Children's Defense Fund, Family Violence Prevention Fund, First Focus, First Star, General Federation of Women's Clubs, National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds, National Association of Children's Hospitals, National Association of Counsel for Children, National Association of Social Workers, National Center for State Courts, National CASA Association, National Education Association, National Exchange Club Foundation, National Network to End Domestic Violence, National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, National PTA, National Respite Coalition, Parents Anonymous, Prevent Child Abuse America, Stop It Now!, UCLA/Duke Nat'l. Center for Child Traumatic Stress, Voices for America's Children