



Community Alliance for the Ethical Treatment of Youth

February 9, 2009  
Rep. George Miller, Chairman  
U.S. House Education & Labor Committee  
2181 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller:

On behalf of our members, I am writing in support of the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act. The Community Alliance for the Ethical Treatment of Youth (CAFETY), is an advocacy organization dedicated to ending the inhumane treatment of youth in residential care. We are made up primarily of formerly institutionalized individuals placed in various U.S. owned programs across the nation and abroad and are outraged that abuses continue to occur. We believe the government has an important role in protecting the basic the human dignity of youth. At this moment, young people continue to be maltreated and are being denied care that meets basic recognized standards such as the right to least restrictive care, appropriate mental health treatment, appropriate education, unrestricted contact with parents, freedom of thought, opinion, association, and of non-censorship, and ultimately, freedom from torture. We believe this bill is an important step in assuring the protection of these basic human rights.

In October 2007 and April 2008, hearings were held on the issue of abuse, torture and death of youth in residential programs. It was revealed what survivors have known all along that abuse and torture, often in the name of treatment, is occurring. This important bill is designed to protect youth from disciplinary techniques that we have experienced, which involve withholding food, water, clothing, shelter or medical care, use of physical and mechanical restraints that are inconsistent with the well-being of the child, and acts of physical or mental abuse designed to humiliate, degrade, or undermine a child's self-respect. This bill also provides for reasonable access to a telephone, the training of staff members as to the definitions of child abuse and how to report it, disclosure of staff qualifications and criminal; background checks for such staff, policies and procedures for emergency medical care and parental notification of changes in care, and

notification of parents of violations of applicable laws and licensing standard. This is welcome change that cannot come soon enough for those whose parents were misled and have lived through these egregious violations of our human rights, with no recourse available.

For us survivors, those presently imprisoned in such facilities and, most of all, those youth who have died at the hands of this industry, there is no justice to be found. It is not too late, however, for future generations of youth who are struggling with behavioral, emotional and mental health issues and deserve to find real help. Youth that face such challenges are entitled to legitimate care and to be protected from harm. Such youth are not simply liars and manipulators; they are, as we were, human beings struggling, in need of support, of being heard and engaged as collaborative participants in their own treatment. Such youth need not be further traumatized by being kidnapped in the middle of the night, silenced through censorship and broken down by psychological distress, indefinite imprisonment and being subjected to punitive and aversive practices. Surely as a nation we have moved beyond such antiquated thinking as youth are to be seen and not heard and recognize the difference between growth and violent fear-based submission.

It is clear, that many facilities do not advocate such practices as those understood to be 'best practices'. This rogue industry can learn from such that do not treat youth coercively. Such exemplary facilities such as the one we heard about at the hearings in April 2008 called the Walker School understands best practices and treats youth accordingly by only accepting students from their state, whereby parents have open access to the campus and aversive, punitive practices are not used. We hope that this bill and continual dissemination of accurate information will help educate parents on these vital differences the difference between facilities that demonstrate respect for the youth and families they serve and those that base their practices on fear preying on the desperation of parents and the terror of those youth who are threatened with parental abandonment or assured certain death if they dont submit to the program.

We applaud you again for your efforts and leadership in taking the needs of youth seriously and the introduction of legislation to that end. In closing, we would like to offer our assistance in the passing of this bill. Please contact Brian Lombrowski, M.P.P., President of CAFETY at [redacted] if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,

Brian Lombrowski , M.P.P., President  
ASTART Member  
Long Island, NY

Kathryn Whitehead, Executive Director  
Mission Mountain School Survivor  
ASTART Member  
Brooklyn, NY

Eric Beasley  
Cafety Board Member  
Casa by the Sea, Ensenada, MX  
Fort Meade, MD

Alex Koroknay-Palicz  
Executive Director  
National Youth Rights Association  
Washington, D.C.

Lorin Gehring  
CAFETY Board Member  
Youth Resource Specialist  
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health  
ASTART Member  
Provo, Utah

Charles Huffine, M.D.  
CAFETY Board Member  
ASTART Member  
Seattle, WA

Jon Martin-Crawford  
CAFETY Board Member  
Pursuing Ed.M, SUNY-New Paltz  
Family Foundation School survivor  
Kingston, NY

Michelle Callner, Esq.  
CAFETY Board Member  
3L Boston College  
Mission Mountain School survivor  
Boston, MA

Bill Boyles  
CAFETY Board Member  
WWASP's Paradise Cove (Western Samoa) Survivor,  
Casa by the Sea (Mexico) Survivor  
Orlando, FL

Christy Dibble

CAFETY Volunteer  
New Bethany Girl's School Arcadia LA & Beulah Land Girls School Blanco TX  
Dallas/Ft Worth Texas

Charles King  
CAFETY Co-Founder  
Tranquility Bay Survivor  
ASTART Member  
Seattle, WA

Mor Keshet, MCAT  
CAFETY Board Member  
Creative Arts Therapist  
Brooklyn, NY

Andy Domenico  
Provo Canyon School Survivor  
Dallas, TX

Susan Sheehan  
CAFETY volunteer  
Family Foundation School Survivor Family Member  
New York City

Chris Noroski  
CAFETY Volunteer  
Family Foundation School  
St. Paul, MN

Eric Norwood  
Utah Boys Ranch Network Founder  
Utah Boys Ranch/ West Ridge Academy  
Los Angeles, CA

Amanda Donovan, MSW  
CAFETY Volunteer/ASTART Member  
DeSisto School 1993-1993  
Ipswich, MA

Elizabeth Broderick  
CAFETY Volunteer  
Irvine, CA

Lenore Behar, Ph.D.  
ASTART Member  
Durham, NC