

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:

As the mothers and fathers of three teenagers: Aaron Bacon, Erica Harvey and Ryan Lewis, who tragically and unnecessarily lost their lives in private residential programs, we gratefully support H.R.911, the "Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2009."

We believe families seeking help for their vulnerable children should not have to fear that the very people promising care will, instead, emotionally and physically neglect and abuse those children. Until now, inadequate or non-existent state regulations, coupled with a complete lack of federal oversight meant that parents, often in emotional distress, made decisions about residential programs with little knowledge aside from the marketing materials provided by the programs themselves. H.R. 911 provides delivery of essential information to families considering residential placement for a child.

We believe children in residential placement should not be kept from calling their mother or father when they need to hear Mom's or Dad's voice. We believe a child in a residential program, if the victim or witness of neglect or abuse, should have the ability to cry out for help, be heard, and then to swiftly receive help. H.R. 911 will ensure no child is denied these basic rights.

We believe operators of teen residential programs should be held responsible for their actions when they result in the death, physical or emotional damage of a child. H.R. 911 provides additional avenues of accountability when a program fails its duties.

As the parents of three children who died in programs that were supposed to help, not hurt, we believe H.R. 911 is a strong step forward in ensuring that no future family will suffer the terrible loss that each of our families has endured.

Thank you, Chairman Miller for your longstanding commitment to the health and safety of children in teen residential programs and for your leadership in introducing H.R. 911.

Sally and Bob Bacon, parents of Aaron

Cynthia Clark and Michael Harvey, parents of Erica

Diana and Paul Lewis, parents of Ryan