



**The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, Inc.**  
*A national voice for special education rights and advocacy*

February 9, 2009

The Honorable George Miller  
Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor  
US House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act

Dear Chairman Miller:

The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA) writes to support your bill, H.R. 911, the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act. Thank you and Congressman McCarthy for your leadership and strong advocacy on this important issue.

As an organization dedicated to protecting the educational and civil rights of children with disabilities, COPAA strongly supports your efforts to end abuse in residential and other programs. H.R. 911 will make clear that children placed in residential programs, including therapeutic boarding schools, wilderness camps, boot camps and behavior modification facilities, have the right to be free from abuse and neglect. Many of these children have disabilities, including emotional and mental health special needs. The bill will increase transparency. It will hold programs accountable through unannounced site inspections, civil penalties, and enabling parents to seek redress in a court of law if their child is abused and harmed. It will also encourage states to adopt strong enforcement and monitoring programs.

According to the General Accountability Office, there have been thousands of allegations of abuse and neglect at these programs, a number of which have resulted in death and serious injury. In 2005 alone, 33 states reported 1,619 staff members were involved in abuse incidents in residential programs. The GAO also found a pattern of ineffective management that compounded the effects of the abuse.

Every child in America is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, in a program that is free of abuse. While some children may be placed in these programs by their parents, others may be placed in them by school districts or other agencies. No child with a disability should be subjected to neglect or abuse in the name of treatment or under the guise of providing educational or therapeutic services, regardless of the setting. Abuse is neither educational nor effective.

Thank you for your efforts to stop child abuse now.

Sincerely yours,

Robert Berlow  
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Government Relations Committee Co-Chairs  
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