

**NATIONAL
CHILD ABUSE
COALITION**

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February 10, 2009

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. 911, the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act of 2009, 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