



Kari Behling, National Director

11700 W. Lake Park Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53224 • Phone (877) 33AACRC • FAX (877) 36AACRC •
E-mail kbehling@alliance1.org • www.aacrc-dc.org

April 29, 2008

The Honorable George Miller, Chair
Committee on Education and Labor
United States House of Representatives
2205 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Miller,

The American Association of Children's Residential Centers (AACRC) strongly supports your legislation (HR 5876) to "Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens." This support is in addition to the testimony of AACRC Board Member Dr. Christopher Bellonci offered at Thursday, April 24, 2008 hearing regarding the importance of licensing standards for residential programs serving adolescents and youth. We applaud your leadership in addressing this issue by requiring state and federal oversight of unregulated and unmonitored residential programs and facilities that purport to help young people.

Founded in 1956, AACRC is the oldest national association focused on the needs of children with serious mental and behavioral problems who are in residential or other milieu-based placements designed to treat these conditions. AACRC requires licensure of its agency members, of which there are currently over 100 from around the country, and strongly encourages national accreditation. Our association's focus is that of clinical excellence and the promotion of best practices, as reflected in our annual conference presentations, our published journal, and in our series of white papers previously provided to you Committee.

As a national leader in the field of residential treatment, AACRC believes that effective licensing requirements will go a long way towards preventing child maltreatment. Such regulations can help assure families that there are appropriate systems and practices in place to prevent harm to children and youth in care. Moreover, AACRC supports a culture of family-driven-care in which families are intrinsically valued and actively involved in their child's program and success.

In a letter addressed to you in December 2007 AACRC voiced its support for the efforts of this Committee to heighten awareness regarding the importance of licensure in children's residential centers. We fully support the proposed legislation and are available for any further testimony or support that will help advance the agenda of this Committee and overall best practices in the field of residential treatment.

You may contact me (805-445-7801) or our Public Policy Chair, Mr. Robert Lieberman (541-956-4943 ext. 1117) for any further discussion. Thank you for your attention to this sensitive topic.

Sincerely,

Steven E. Elson, Ph.D.
President, AACRC Board of Directors