

"HR 911 Please introduce and pass in Senate"

Private residential facilities for problem youths have become a lucrative industry in the past few decades. The industry is poorly and unevenly regulated. Some facilities escape regulation by being called boarding schools even though their real focus is behavior modification rather than education. Some are unregulated because they are wilderness camps. Some are unregulated because youths choose to go there "voluntarily" rather than being kidnapped from their homes by hired escorts. And some are unregulated because they are owned and operated by churches.

The 2009 bill, HR911, outlaws many of the abuses that have caused deaths in these programs. It prohibits disciplinary practices that withhold "essential food, water, clothing, shelter, or medical care."

It sets limits on the use of physical and mechanical restraints and seclusion.

It requires all staff to be familiar with the signs of and appropriate responses to heatstroke, dehydration, and hypothermia. It requires the program to have policies for the provision of emergency medical care. It requires that youths be allowed to make and receive phone calls with "as much privacy as possible" and be allowed to call the state hotline to report abuses.

HR911 does not exempt church-run facilities from its requirements. It will greatly improve protection for young people in residential care, especially in Missouri, which allows church-run facilities to operate without even sanitation or food safety inspections and which has been a giant magnet for operators of abusive programs who get in trouble elsewhere.

Please consider sponsoring or co-sponsoring HR911 in the Senate; we must protect the rights and lives of all our citizens, even those too young to vote.

We have sent 164 letters to Congress so far. Please join us!

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