

EXHIBIT 12  
DATE 2-18-05  
HB 628

February 18, 2005

Dear Representative Holly Raser,

Please oppose HB 628, regarding registration of alternative adolescent residential programs and creating a board.

I've dedicated my professional career to inspiring the lives of at-risk and emotionally disturbed youth for various therapeutic and outdoor program services. The programs requesting and driving this legislation serve primarily privately placed, out-of-state youth who are placed by their parents. These youth receive residential, therapeutic and educational services in a variety of venues. Some focus on education, some on outdoor experiences and some are faith-based as well. The common theme, however, is that they are acting in the role of caretaker. The youth live within the programs' buildings, and receive services 24 hours a day.

There is no need to avoid regulation of the Department of Public Health and Human Services. DPHHS has well established their ability to regulate a vast range of types of homes, services and for a broad spectrum of adolescent difficulties. In fact, DPHHS recently completed an impressive set of regulations for Outdoor Behavioral Programs that would likely be completely adequate for these types of programs.

A regulatory board would be unnecessary and could be inadequate. The State has demonstrated proficiency with a more than sufficient range of program regulations. Please do not allow a different standard for privately placed youth in Montana. They deserve adequate and thorough regulation of their programs as well. It's a matter of safety and integrity!

Sincerely,



Gerald Robert Byrd  
P. O. Box 13  
Elliston, MT 59728