EXHIBIT 13
DATE 2-18-05
HB 628

February 18, 2005

Dear Representative Jon Sonju,

Please strongly consider opposing HB 628

I am practicing Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, and I am certified in Equine Assisted Psychotherapy. I have spent the last eight years working for a program that provides treatment and residential care for adolescents through a variety of services including Outdoor Behavioral Program, Intensive Level Therapeutic Group Homes, Mental Health Services and Day Treatment.

I am well aware of DPHHS's ability to regulate many levels of care for a variety of services for youth with emotional and behavioral difficulties. There is no need for a regulatory board for private programs.

I realize that there are many private programs in Montana that provide unique services to privately placed youth whose parents live out of state. However, the underlying thread in all of the programs is that they provide continual care throughout the days and weeks that the youth live in the program. While some offer a primary focus of education, others offer wilderness experiences, others offer equine therapy, while some are faith based. Nonetheless, the primary need is for continual care to help the youth placed in the program learn to make better choices about their behaviors and to grow emotionally.

The very nature of the need of the youth and the fact that the youth live in facilities provided by the programs would require that they need close oversight and regulation. The fact that they are placed privately should not weigh in to the decision about regulation or oversight. There is nothing so unique that DPHHS cannot or would not work with each program to provide for safety and integrity under their regulation.

I urge you to require these programs to fall under the oversight of DPHHS. Do not allow them to fall outside of the expertise of DPHHS and forma regulatory board. The kids deserve better. Thank you.

Sincerely,

M. Angela Johnson

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