

EXHIBIT 14
DATE 2-18-05
HB 628

February 18, 2005

Dear Representative Holly Raser,

I am writing to request that you do not pass HB 628 – the bill you will hear today regarding alternative adolescent residential programs.

I have a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Social Work and have worked for the last 31 years directly serving at-risk and emotionally disturbed youth through a variety of state and private employment. For the last eight years I have worked in the field of providing care for youth in residential and therapeutic care and in the wilderness.

This bill appears to be brought forward by a variety of private programs. There are many of these programs in the state that provide various methods of treatment and in different settings. However, the youth are placed by their parents (who primarily live out of state) and the youth reside in the programs. Whether the focus is faith-based, educational, outdoor therapy or a combination of all, and whether or not the youth spend a short or long time at the program, *these programs provide continual residential care and treatment for the youth.*

Regardless of the nature of the program serving these youth, and regardless of the state of residence of their parents, they must be regulated by the Department of Public Health and Human Services. DPHHS has years of maturity and expertise in regulating all levels of care and for a wide range of difficulties – both emotionally and behaviorally. Just this fall, DPHHS completed the final rules to regulate Outdoor Behavioral Programs which are impressive. The rules are neither too invasive nor intrusive. There will be no difficulty “personalizing” each program within the licensing regulations already in place.

Please hold these programs to the same standard and rules that the youth residents of Montana are protected with. DPHHS can and will regulate and manage these programs very well. This bill is unnecessary. Do not allow private programs to fall outside of the oversight of DPHHS. It's the right thing to do for youth, no matter where they reside. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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