

February 18, 2005

Dear Representative *Holly Raser*,

I am writing in opposition of HB 628, "An act providing for a board of private alternative adolescent residential programs; providing for registration with the Department of Labor and Industry, providing board duties; and requiring a report to the legislature on the need for any additional regulation."

This bill does not provide sufficient oversight for this type of program. There are a significant number of programs in Montana serving at-risk and emotionally/behaviorally disturbed youth. Children are typically out-of-state residents and are placed in these programs by their parents to help with getting the youth back on track after experiencing significant behavioral and emotional problems in their homes. These programs provide offer a range of services - some offer brief stays, others focus on the educational component, while others promote changes through outdoor experiences. Some offer all of the above.

All offer around the clock care. Children and youth who reside in private programs deserve the same regulation and oversight as those youth who are Montana residents. The nature and breadth of services provided to these youth need to be regulated, NOT BY A REGULATORY BOARD, but by the Department of Health & Human Services. A regulatory board is unnecessary and inadequate.

DPHHS has established their expertise and knowledge in licensing and regulating all of the variety of services provided by these programs. PLEASE ASSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN LIVING IN MONTANA, REGARDLESS OF THE RESIDENCY OF THEIR PARENTS, RECEIVE EQUAL, QUALITY CARE. Please do not pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Linda Fowler, MSW, LCSW

Linda Fowler, MSW, LCSW
612 Cannon
Helena, MT 59601