



April 23, 2008

The Honorable George Miller
United States House of Representatives
2205 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Miller:

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), representing hundreds of public and private child-serving member agencies located in all fifty states, applauds your legislation to address the abuse of teenage children placed in facilities sometimes referred to as outdoor camps, wilderness camps or boot camps. Your legislation will provide much needed management over programs and facilities that have for too long operated without adequate regulation or licensing by either state or federal law. We commend your leadership demonstrated both through this legislation and last fall's hearings in highlighting the needs of young people and their families who relied on these facilities and who experienced sometimes tragic consequences.

A recent GAO report on residential therapy, outdoor wilderness, and boot camp programs noted during 2005 alone, 33 states reported 1,619 staff members involved in incidents of abuse in residential programs. GAO also examined, in greater detail, 10 cases from 1990 through 2004 where a teenager died while enrolled in a private program. Further, GAO could not identify a more concrete number of allegations because it could not locate a single Web site, federal agency, or other entity that collects comprehensive nationwide data. The report demonstrates clearly the difficulty in getting a true picture of what is taking place in these unregulated and unlicensed programs.

Your bill is an important step toward reducing the number of youths abused at these types of programs, and rectifying these concerns. Thank you for your continued leadership on behalf of children and families. We look forward to working with you on crafting this legislation and advancing the reforms included in your bill as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine James-Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine James-Brown
President/CEO