

HOUSE MEMORIAL 52

52ND LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2016

INTRODUCED BY

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This document incorporates committee amendments adopted during standing committee(s) consideration of this measure. It is a tool to show the amendments in context and is not to be used for introduction, amendment or substitution.

A MEMORIAL

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR INCREASED AWARENESS OF THE "TROUBLED TEEN" INDUSTRY AND REQUESTING THAT THE NEW MEXICO CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION SUPPORT LEGISLATION TO REFORM RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT AND YOUTH BOOT CAMP PROGRAMS NATIONWIDE.

WHEREAS, residential treatment and youth boot camp programs have existed for several decades as a last resort treatment option for children with behavioral and mental health issues; and

WHEREAS, families turn to these programs when in need of more assistance than traditional inpatient mental health services or therapy programs are able to offer; and

WHEREAS, many residential treatment programs have successfully helped children with severe behavioral problems; and

WHEREAS, the industry consists of facilities that

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advertise that they can help troubled teens but, in fact, may use methods that include physical and emotional abuse; and

WHEREAS, the "troubled teen" industry is made up of many for-profit, unregulated residential treatment programs that promise to instill discipline, responsibility and personal change in "troubled" youth; and

WHEREAS, some programs employ a widely discredited method of "behavior modification" of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth, also known as gay conversion therapy; and

WHEREAS, some programs do not differentiate between troubled teen and normal teenage behavior; and

WHEREAS, some programs accept adolescents into the teen program; and

WHEREAS, concerns have been raised about the possible violation of the rights of children in some residential treatment programs; and

WHEREAS, a 2008 United States government accountability office report on residential facilities documented widespread reports of abuse and death in a variety of such programs, which abuse included the excessive use of physical restraints, severe methods of intimidation, starvation, neglectful medical practices and physical abuse; and

WHEREAS, the report also documented that thirty-four states had reported more than one thousand five hundred staff members involved in incidents of child abuse or neglect in

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2005; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, at least twenty-eight states reported at least one death in a youth residential treatment program; and

WHEREAS, the United States government accountability office also found that untrained staff, lack of adequate nourishment and reckless operating practices have all contributed to deaths of teenagers in these programs; and

~~WHEREAS, Tierra Blanca ranch, a boot camp for troubled teens in southern New Mexico, came under scrutiny in 2013 when a teen resident died; and~~

WHEREAS, there are no statistics tracking the outcomes of these programs; and

WHEREAS, in New Mexico, the children, youth and families department provides for licensing of residential treatment centers but does not license short-term facilities such as youth boot camps; and

WHEREAS, concerns have been raised about whether children in some facilities have been prevented from communicating freely with family members or other authorities; and

WHEREAS, there are inadequate safeguards to prevent unnecessary placement of children in these facilities; and

WHEREAS, bipartisan legislation has been introduced in the United States house of representatives to reform residential treatment and youth boot camp programs nationwide; and

WHEREAS, federal legislation could help prevent these

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abusive boot camps from shutting down in one state and reopening in another under a different name; and

WHEREAS, federal legislation will require states to establish standards that are at least as strict as federal standards; and

WHEREAS, federal legislation will require states to develop policies that ensure that every program is properly licensed and in compliance with license requirements;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that support be expressed for increased awareness of the troubled teen industry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New Mexico congressional delegation be requested to support legislation to reform residential treatment and youth boot camp programs nationwide; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the office of the governor, the office of the attorney general, the secretary of children, youth and families, the administrative office of the courts and each member of the New Mexico congressional delegation.