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HOUSE MEMORIAL 52

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

INTRODUCED BY

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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

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1 WHEREAS, the industry consists of facilities that
2 advertise that they can help troubled teens but, in fact, may
3 use methods that include physical and emotional abuse; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 WHEREAS, the report also documented that thirty-four
25 states had reported more than one thousand five hundred staff

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1 members involved in incidents of child abuse or neglect in
2 2005; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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