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News Release

Youth Advocates Urge Congress to Support HR 5876 to End Rampant Child Abuse and Teen Torture

Washington, DC – June 19, 2008: The National Youth Rights Association unequivocally endorses HR 5876, the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act and urges Congress to pass it in tomorrow's upcoming vote.

The teen behavior modification facilities HR 5876 seeks to regulate have long been recognized by the National Youth Rights Association (NYRA) and many other child advocacy organizations as one of the largest threats to the lives and rights of tens of thousands of young people across our nation.

"These American Abu Ghraibs are the forced homes of an upwards of 30,000 youths annually, and the documented abuses that go on unchecked in these facilities are brutal and shocking," says NYRA Executive Director, Alex Koroknay-Palicz.

The regulations put into place by HR 5876 would prohibit these programs from physically, mentally or sexually abusing children in their care and would prohibit them from denying children essential water, food, clothing, shelter, or medical care- a common punishment often imposed in these facilities. The national standards will help to reign in the "severe neglect and suffering" and the rampant "violations of youth rights" that the Government Accountability Office found in a recent, comprehensive report.

These prohibitions will serve to prevent the numerous tragedies that come out of these programs, like the case of Robert Rollins, a 12 year old who died of asphyxiation after being restrained for wanting his teddy bear or the cases of Bobby Joe Randolph, a 17 year old, and Angie Arndt, a 7 year old whose murders by staffers in these programs lead to only minor consequences for the facilities.

Chip Sinton, Vice President of NYRA, notes that "the most monstrous practices and 'punishments' in these facilities, which are at times more heinous and dehumanizing than the torture utilized against detainees in Guantanamo Bay, will finally be able to be stopped by this bill, which is a literal godsend to the teens in these camps"

About NYRA:

The National Youth Rights Association is a national, youth-led organization whose mission is to promote awareness of the legal and civil rights of young people in the United States. NYRA is based in Washington, DC and was founded in 1998. NYRA has nearly 7,000 members and has been featured on CNN, Fox News, PBS, and in the Washington Post, New York Times, Boston Globe, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, Christian Science Monitor, and numerous other publications.

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