



Catholic Charities

SOCIAL CONCERNS • PARISH SOCIAL MINISTRY

Legislative Education Group (L.E.G.)

SERVING MARYLAND'S VULNERABLE POPULATIONS FOR OVER 30 YEARS

March 2008

A BRIGHT FUTURE

Dear L.E.G. Member:

We write asking you to *support* legislation that would require a person to be certified to work directly with children as a "child and youth care practitioner" in a residential child care program, commonly called a group home. The proposal is **SB 783 – Residential Child Care Program - Certification of Residential Child and Youth Care Practitioners**.

Background:

- Children in residential child care programs suffer from the effects of abuse and neglect, mental illness, substance abuse, and/or other illnesses and disabilities.
- Children in residential care programs are extremely vulnerable, can exhibit very challenging behaviors stemming from hurt and anger, and require specialized care, supervision, and treatment outside of the home.
- Direct care workers must respond with skill and empathy as they supervise and guide children on evenings, weekends, and holidays, and through the events of daily life: homework, meals, peer interactions, bedtime, exercise, recreation, etc.
- There are currently no workforce standards for direct care workers, who provide 24/7 supervision and spend more time with troubled children than teachers, therapists or social workers, who see them a few hours per day or even just a few hours per week.
- Most direct care workers have limited formal education, training, and experience to prepare them to care for children with extraordinary challenges.
- There are an estimated 10,000 child and youth care practitioners in Maryland who serve approximately 2,500 youth in nearly 400 residential child care programs.

SB 783 would:

- Require all direct care workers to be certified by the State by 2013.
- Establish that, to become certified as a residential child and youth care practitioner, a person must be of good moral character, complete a criminal history records check, meet certain age and education requirements, and pass a State examination.

Why Support SB 783?

- To ensure that the people caring for Maryland's most vulnerable children in residential programs are properly trained, qualified, and certified.
- To attract dedicated and well-trained people to care for children in residential programs.

What YOU can do to HELP:

Write, email or call the legislator from your jurisdiction on the House Health and Government Operations Committee (*see list at end of alert*). If your legislator does not serve on the Health and Government Operations Committee, please contact the Chairman.

The Honorable Peter Hammen
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
peter.hammen@house.state.md.us
410.841.3772

A "Sample Alert Letter" is enclosed on the following page.

NOW is the opportunity for us to support this legislation to ensure that people caring for vulnerable and troubled children are properly trained and qualified. Your action is important to children in residential child care settings who require specialized care and supervision due to their histories of abuse, neglect, trauma, and disadvantage.

Please accept our gratitude for your willingness to add your voice in support of this important legislation. Maryland's most vulnerable children should receive the care they need from qualified, trained individuals who will support their physical, emotional, and intellectual development and give them hope for a bright future.

Sincerely,



Allison Stone
L.E.G. Coordinator

"...Government does have a positive moral responsibility in safeguarding human rights and ensuring that the minimum conditions of human dignity are met for all. In a democracy, government is a means by which we can act together to protect what is important to us and to promote our common values."

~Economic Justice for All, United States Catholic Bishops

S A M P L E " A L E R T " L E T T E R

Name of Delegate
House Office Building, Room _____
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support of SB 783 – Residential Child Care Programs – Certification of Residential Child and Youth Care Practitioner

Dear Delegate or Chairperson _____:

As a Maryland citizen who cares about the welfare of Maryland's children, I support SB 783.

Children who require residential care, treatment, and supervision have suffered from the effects of abuse, neglect, mental illness, substance abuse, disabilities, and/or other illnesses. Due to their difficult life circumstances, they require specialized care outside of the home.

To heal and return to family settings and eventually grow into responsible, caring adults themselves, children need caregivers who can support their physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Certification of direct care workers establishes essential work force standards and helps attract qualified individuals to direct care work. Because direct care workers touch children's lives every day, all day long, more than any other adult, they must be prepared to deal with difficult behaviors and help children overcome the challenges of their previous abuse and neglect, disability, or other life circumstances. Only with appropriate support and nurturing care can these vulnerable children look forward to a brighter future.

I urge you to support SB 783.

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Address

S A M P L E " A L E R T " L E T T E R

House Health and Government Operations Committee

ALL PHONE NUMBERS BEGIN WITH 410-841-. Extension listed below.

Chair: The Honorable Peter Hammen: 3772, Rm. 241

peter.hammen@house.state.md.us

Vice Chair: Shane Pendergrass: 3139, Rm. 241

shane.pendergrass@house.state.md.us

Wendell Beitzel: 3435, Rm. 320

wendell.beitzel@house.state.md.us

Heather Mizeur: 3493, Rm. 219

heather.mizeur@house.state.md.us

Joanne Benson: 3692, Rm. 203

joanne.benson@house.state.md.us

Karen Montgomery: 3110, Rm. 222

karen.montgomery@house.state.md.us

Eric Bromwell: 3766, Rm. 305

eric.bromwell@house.state.md.us

Dan Morhaim: 3054, Rm. 362

dan.morhaim@house.state.md.us

Robert Costa: 3551, Rm. 159

bob.costa@house.state.md.us

Shirley Nathan-Pulliam: 3358, Rm. 309

shirley.nathan.pulliam@house.state.md.us

John Donoghue: 3125, Rm. 307

john.donoghue@house.state.md.us

Nathaniel Oaks: 3283, Rm. 317

nathaniel.oaks@house.state.md.us

Donald Elliott: 3118, Rm. 311

donald.elliott@house.state.md.us

Joseline Pena-Melnyk: 3502, Rm. 209

joseline.pena.melnyk@house.state.md.us

James Hubbard: 3103, Rm. 363

james.hubbard@house.state.md.us

Kirill Reznik: 3039, Rm. 225

kirill.reznik@house.state.md.us

A. Wade Kach: 3359, Rm. 201

a.wade.kach@house.state.md.us

Daniel Riley: 3280, Rm. 326

daniel.riley@house.state.md.us

Nicholaus Kipke: 3421, Rm. 164

nicholaus.kipke@house.state.md.us

Shawn Tarrant: 3545, Rm. 316

shawn.tarrant@house.state.md.us

Sue Kullen: 3231, Rm. 151

sue.kullen@house.state.md.us

Veronica Turner: 3212, Rm. 205

veronica.turner@house.state.md.us

Patrick McDonough: 3334, Rm. 310

pat.mcdonough@house.state.md.us

Richard Weldon: 3240, Rm. 324

richard.weldon@house.state.md.us