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2/8/2021

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Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

As the largest national membership organization of residential treatment centers, therapeutic boarding schools, and wilderness therapy programs across the country, the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP) supports Senate Bill 127.

NATSAP member schools and programs, more than 50 of which are located in Utah, are dedicated to providing effective care to thousands of adolescents and young adults with mental, behavioral, and emotional challenges. Our schools and programs provide excellent treatment for program participants; treatment rooted in heart-felt concern for their well-being and growth; respect for the students as human beings; and sensitivity to their individual needs and integrity.

As such, NATSAP strongly supports the creation of laws, such as SB. 127, that help protect the rights and safety of the students who attend our programs. Specifically, we support raising the number of site visits (both announced and unannounced) in congregate care facilities, as well as increasing the program reporting requirements regarding restraint or seclusion of students. These provisions are in sync with NATSAP's mission to keep youth and staff safe, and increase standards in the field.

We applaud the bill sponsor, this committee, and especially Amanda Slater, Director of the Office of Licensing at the Utah Department of Human Services for the tireless work in crafting S.B 127 and bringing it to the Utah legislature.

Sincerely,

Megan Stokes
Executive Director