

February 7, 2021

Chairman Todd D. Weiler  
350 State St.  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84103

Dear Chairman Weiler,

My name is Jenna Bulis and I am a founder of Breaking Code Silence and a survivor of institutional abuse. I am advocating for support of SB0217.

At 15 years old of age, I was legally kidnapped by hired escorts and sent to a “behavior modification” program owned and operated by World Wide Association of Specialty Programs. Due to the lack of services within Washington State my parents sought out of state treatment from a facility that claimed to specialize in adolescent mental health treatment. The main company was founded in Utah and had facilities operating within the state. The fact that WWASP was able to operate out of Utah for over 20 years signifies a systemic problem within licensing and oversight in Utah. Every WWASP facility was eventually closed with numerous claims of abuse, however programs utilizing the same behavior modification model are still operating within Utah and have since taken their place.

The “troubled teen industry” foundation was built on fraudulent treatment modalities that have since been deemed ineffective and harmful. Furthermore, the lack of licensing and screening requirements or for staff creates a culture of abuse. If an industry creates a community consisting of thousands of survivors, it’s a sign that reform is needed. We are in the middle of a mental health crisis and need evidence-based treatment for our vulnerable youth. The bad actors that continue to abuse children and destroy families need to be identified and closed. Every child has the constitutional right to life and protection from abuse.

This industry has operated in grey area and loopholes for years. The first step is enacting SB0127 which proposes new standards to protect children from institutional child abuse. It proposes ethical standards for the use of restraint and seclusion and requires necessary reporting of these critical incidents. Additionally, SB0127 increases the frequency of unannounced inspections required by the state. These are some commonsense practices that will identify best practices and bad actors. Our knowledge of mental health and addiction treatment has evolved within the past 20 years, it is time for the legislation to support the science and move to evidence-based treatments and away from abusive practices.

I ask that you support SB0127 for the thousands of youth currently in congregate care facilities and the future generation of parents and children that seek mental health services.

Sincerely,

Jenna Bulis  
Senior Legislative Policy Advisor  
breakingcodesilence.net

Feb 08,2021

Chairman Todd D. Weiler

[350 State St.](#)

[Salt Lake City, Utah 84103](#)

Chairman Weiler,

My name is Melissa Tholstrup, I am a parent and a member of the group Breaking Code Silence!

I am writing to express support for HB0127!

I am currently a resident of Idaho..However, My son attended a residential treatment center in Utah with Youth Health Associates (YHA) from Nov 2018- May 22,2019!

During the time my son spent at this youth facility he was placed under what was called "lockdown" A harsh form of punishment often used ! This practice of seclusion Is no where written in the YHA rules and handbook manual..!

When inquiring in a email about this form of punishment..The boys residential program director at the facility described

"We have been on lockdown more than usual. When we have more then half of our clients on consequence is when we go on. Lockdown is in rooms, on chairs and no talking. They do go to school and groups when we have them but other than that they are in their rooms. Those not on consequence have access to use their books, and come outside to do different activities.

Devin Frischknecht"

Mr. Frischknecht failed to mention..how traumatizing this is for the children & how often lockdown is used! The boys are made to sit on hard chairs not able to get up ..stretch or stand..with the exception of going to the restroom with no talking, for not just a few hours...or days..but

At one point they were on lockdown for 12 days straight!!! 😞

A lot of those days no schooling was even offered..! An hour of PE exercise was sometimes given a day for the children that hadn't gotten marks..the rest of the children were required to pull weeds instead! After the hr...The Residents were required again to go back to their hard chair..meals were also given In the chairs!!! This practice of seclusion & neglect in residential treatment facilities needs to be regulated and stopped! Please support and vote for HB0127 where the practices such as lockdown can be monitored and the trauma that is caused by such practices can be stopped!!

Thank you ,

Sincerely

Melissa Tholstrup

(509)553-3600

[LissaTholstrup@gmail.com](mailto:LissaTholstrup@gmail.com)

Dear Chairman Weiler,

My name is Pamela Raymond. I am a member of Parents for Breaking Code Silence writing to you regarding Utah SB0217. I am also a parent who sent her child to a troubled teen facility in upstate New York. Although that particular "school" (it was not accredited, although they claimed they were) was not in Utah, it was part of a network of schools/programs for troubled teens, some of which were in Utah. I was fed so many lies to convince me that my child would be "fixed" by their system. In actuality it nearly destroyed my daughter. We have been able to maintain a relationship in part because I too realized what a harmful sham these schools are. The sexual abuse my daughter suffered was inexcusable and unconscionable. She was given a gynecological exam by a male doctor with no other female in the room. We were told she had an STD, When we obtained her medical records, it stated " No STDs found. The facility was heated for visitors only. I can attest to the fact that I showed up unannounced to test that "rumor"; and I can tell you – IT WAS FREEZING IN THERE. These are only a couple of physical abuses experienced. The mental abuse is even more insidious.

Years later my daughter is suffering from depression, anxiety and panic attacks, paranoia, and PTSD. She is searching for an appropriate mental health professional; but is fearful and mistrustful. I have my own issues thanks to the lies the TTI employees fed us.

Mr. Weiler, these schools are laying waste to our children. Many are damaged and hurting adults now. We must stop this cycle of abuse and deceit, before it destroys even one more life. We MUST start some where; and this bill can have far reaching positive impact for our youth. Please embrace this opportunity for positive change. I hope and pray that other states will follow suit until these facilities are shut down permanently.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration

Most sincerely

Pamela Raymond