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FULL NEWS RELEASE BELOW

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Click on the image below to watch video of Congressman Rothman speaking on the House Floor about this teen safety measure (June 24, 2008)

(Washington, DC)—Today, a teen safety measure introduced by Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives as part of groundbreaking legislation to stop child abuse and neglect at private treatment facilities, such as teen boot camps and correctional boarding schools. Specifically, Rothman's amendment requires that residential programs notify parents within 48 hours of any reports of abuse, neglect, or violations of health and safety standards. This provision was included in the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act (H.R. 6358), which passed by a vote of 318 to 103.

"The severity of the abuse and neglect reported at some of these private programs is horrifying. No child, regardless of how troubled, should ever be subjected to physical violence at the hands of their caregiver. The type of 'tough love' practiced in some of these facilities can result in serious abuse and even death. In 2005, a 14-year-old boy from Florida was beaten and kicked to death a mere three hours after his admission to a boot camp program, by the very people entrusted with his care. These alarming incidences of abuse must end. I am proud that this Congress has taken action to establish new national safety standards and guidelines for private therapy facilities, to reduce these incidents," said Rothman.

Underscoring the need for this bill, a recent study by the Government Accountability Office found thousands of reports of abuse in privately-run facilities for teens. In 2005 alone, 33 states reported that 1,619 staff members were involved in cases of abuse. The Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act begins the process of cleaning up these facilities by establishing new, stricter guidelines and means of reporting.

Rothman was a major proponent of the base bill, H.R. 5876, and worked closely with the Committee on Education and Labor to strengthen its accountability measures. Rothman's amendment not only mandates that residential programs swiftly inform parents about any reports of child abuse and neglect, but also requires increased transparency in the public reporting of any deaths at a facility. The Rothman provision directs such programs to notify parents of any report of abuse immediately to the maximum extent practicable, but no later than within 48 hours. In addition, the bill creates a publicly searchable Web site that will contain information about these facilities, such as deaths, reports of abuse, and violations of safety standards. Rothman's provision instructs facilities to also provide the cause of any deaths which occur during treatment on the Web site.

As a Member of the House Caucus on Children's Health and the Children's Study Working Group, Congressman Rothman has been a strong ally of children during his six terms in the House of Representatives. Having passed the House, the Stop Child Abuse in Residential Programs for Teens Act now heads to the U.S. Senate.

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