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February 12, 2008

Greetings Chairman Ogden, Senate Finance Committee Members:

I'm speaking on behalf of the Texas Network of Youth Services, a statewide youth services association.

Many of our member agencies operate residential programs - emergency shelters, foster homes, basic care facilities, and residential treatment. You have (or will) hear from several of these agencies today. I will be brief to avoid repetition; but I want you to know that TNOYS is here to speak on behalf of many of our members who can't be here today.

It is very distressing, when we get the phone call from an agency that has been forced to close facilities, because they just can't survive financially. Others are still holding on; but we're very concerned about more closures if there is no financial relief with the rates. It's an experience that holds true across all levels of care; but we have been especially hearing from emergency shelters, who are facing huge challenges trying to serve young people who sometimes have greater needs that can be addressed well in a shelter setting; so many of these kids end up in shelters because there is nothing available.

An increase to the reimbursement rate is simply critical; without it, programs will continue to close, and the state will lose an infrastructure that may be impossible to build back up.

Thank you,

Theresa Andreas Tod  
Executive Director  
Texas Network of Youth Services