

My name is Katie Lake, and in 1997, when I was 12 years old, my mother chose to privately place me in a program in Oregon State. I had never been in trouble with the law, but I was strong willed, and wished for personal autonomy.

On February 4th, 1997, I was approached by two individuals, I was put in handcuffs and driven 6 hours out of my state and into Oregon. Arriving at 1 AM, I was strip searched, informed I was not allowed to cry or talk to the other girls. I spent the next 2 1/2 years working their farm and trying to gain the approval of the program owners. The Program was called Royal Haven, an unlicensed, equestrian home for girls. The owners were Karen Lee Gage and Steven Michael Gage, a now convicted child rapist, sentenced to 45 years for his crimes against children, who later died in an Oregon State Prison.

This was my 1st of 4 programs, 2 of my programs were Oregon State placements.

Upon arrival communication with my family

was cut off, and phone privileges had to be earned. Once earned they were heavily monitored, or taken away. There were no doctors, no therapists, no advocates or agencies coming to help us. There were zero regulations and no oversight. This environment allows abusive homes/programs to continue hurting children and families.

Unlicensed and unregulated placements are unsafe and leave children susceptible to longterm abuse and lifelong trauma. We must listen to the children, to the survivors of these facilities, and to the family members, so we can protect and prevent further abuse in this industry.

My experience in these programs is not unique, and it shows why these agencies cannot continue to operate without stronger oversight, firm licensing requirements and outside regulation.

This bill leaves children less protected by allowing them to be placed in unlicensed programs. I ask for this bill to be taken off the

table so we can prevent further harm and improve outcomes for vulnerable children, and families.

Thank you for your time,
Katie Lake