

My name is Temira Lital. I am a mental health professional in the states of Oregon and Washington and a board-certified counselor through NBCC. When I was 15 years old, I was the victim of a teen transport service. I was also the victim of an unregulated Troubled Teen Industry facility.

Let me set the stage for you. School had just finished for the year. I had graduated with straight A's. I had never done drugs. I was a virgin. Everything was fine outside of home. There, the story was different. My parents had taken classes on how to physically restrain me using nerve points. Police were regularly at my home. I had been placed in protective custody on three occasions. My parents, unhappy with this attention from social services, decided to take the drastic step of having me kidnapped and sent away. At 5:30 in the morning, I was dragged from bed. I was fifteen. I was wearing only a bra and underwear. I was carried screaming from the house, stuffed in a car, and then stuffed on a private plane and transported across state lines to a facility that emotionally abused me, fed me 800 calories a day for three months, dragged fellow campers around on leashes, and eventually killed a 15 year old girl named Kristen Chase.

While that's not the topic of this hearing, I recommend you require full licensure and inspection of all so-called therapeutic facilities.

We're talking about the act known as "teen transport". It's not transport. It's licensed kidnapping. I say that as a therapist and as a survivor. The effects on the victims are the same as if they had been kidnapped. This horrific act leads to Post-traumatic stress disorder. It creates terrified, mistrusting children who can't sleep, who have nightmares, who don't trust adults. I strongly recommend you ban it. For 25 years after this happened, I suffered from the trauma. Imagine being torn from your own bed, mostly-naked, by strangers of the opposite sex. For many years, I slept with my bed in front of my door. I slept with a knife under my pillow. I slept in my clothes, ready to run and live on the streets rather than suffer through this again. Teen transport almost destroyed my life. By banning it, you can protect the children of Oregon from similar experiences.

One other thing worth considering: teen transport is often used to facilitate the admission of children to abusive facilities. By banning teen transport, you also end the pipeline that allows for further abuse.

As a mental health counselor and survivor of both teen transport and a Troubled Teen Industry program, I encourage you to ban teen transport and also to highly regulate all facilities that claim to be therapeutic to children.