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STATEMENT OF HANNAH ARCHULETA

On October 22 of 2019, I was suddenly transported against my will to the Turn-About Ranch in Escalante, Utah. At that time, I was seventeen years old and suffering from many life traumas. I had recently learned that my mother was terminally ill with liver failure, and I was very vulnerable and heartbroken. At the Ranch, I was alone and isolated from all of my family. I was initially allowed zero contact with them, which was very hard considering that time with my mother is very precious to me.

Within the first two weeks at Turn-About Ranch, a male staff member came up behind me and suddenly grabbed my butt. I decided not to tell anyone because I was scared of being punished, and I hoped he would not touch me again. Sadly, I was wrong. Later, while I was reaching up into a cabinet, the same male staff grabbed my butt and touched my vaginal area.

I knew I had to tell someone this time, so I confided in female staff members. I expected to be treated with understanding. Instead, I experienced retaliation from the Ranch after I spoke up. In what appeared to me to be punishment for reporting my abuse, I was required to spend extra time picking up horse manure, walking in circles around a horse corral, and sitting at a desk facing a wall for hours. I also had to do forced labor outside in below-freezing temperatures, and sleep on a wooden plank with no pillow. In addition, the retaliation included refusing me access to the bathroom, and denigrating and humiliating me in front of others.

When I was finally able to contact my parents and tell them what happened, my parents rescued me from the program on December 19, 2020. The next day, my father reported what had happened to the Garfield County Sheriff's.

No child should suffer abuse and no child should ever be sent to these ranches. I am here today to spread the message to every parent in America. Do not send your children to these places or endorse them. Love your children and teach them the ways of life with your own heart and soul.

Recently, Paris Hilton publicly announced her experiences at similar “troubled-teen” programs, and I am here to support Paris and many others who speak up against child abuse. If you, or anyone you know has suffered sexual assault or child abuse or retaliation at any of these so called “ranches,” “therapeutic boarding schools” or “wilderness programs,” please report it.

I am speaking at this press conference today because I know that there will be a vote this week on SB 127 sponsored by Utah Senator Michael K. McKell and Utah House Sponsor Brady Brammer. I support this bill and hope that it will be passed and signed into law by the Governor. There has been too much abuse in these private schools and programs where many so-called “troubled teens” have been sent by their parents with the hope that it would help them. Instead, for a number of teens, it has only made their situation worse. I am filing this lawsuit today because I want justice, and I do not want what happened to me to happen to anyone else.

HANNAH ARCHULETA

REPRESENTED BY GLORIA ALLRED

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