

**Sign-On Letter to President Bush requesting a Presidential Proclamation Declaring
November 2003 “National Runaway Prevention Month.”**

The Honorable George W. Bush
United States of America
The White House
Washington DC 20500

President of the

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned organizations are writing to urge you to exercise the educative power of your Office on behalf of extremely vulnerable children and youth by issuing a Proclamation declaring November 2003 “National Runaway Prevention Month.” As organizations committed to supporting youth and their families, we know that all young people, including youth who have left home or who have been turned away by their families, need access to safe places and resources. We strive to support families to help them create strong, nurturing, and safe environments for their children. Yet, we know the struggles that youth face in today’s society. Many of them end up on the streets of America. The numbers are staggering. Between 1.3 and 2.8 million youth experience at least one runaway episode before their 18th birthday. These youth come from every walk of life, from large cities to rural communities and from every ethnic background. It is frightening to think that one in seven youth will runaway or be turned away from home each year. Because the problem is so complex, its solution requires all segments of society to play a role in providing a safety net for these young people.

Our organizations are working on family-based, community-based, and policy-based solutions to the runaway crisis, including focusing public attention to this grave circumstance facing millions of our nation’s young people and their families. National Runaway Prevention Month is one such public awareness effort.

The purpose of National Runaway Prevention Month is to raise awareness of the issues facing runaways and to educate the public about solutions and the role they can play in preventing youth from running. Since 1997, the National Runaway Switchboard (NRS) has commemorated the first week in November as National Runaway Prevention Week. In November 2002, the National Network for Youth joined NRS in commemorating the first-ever National Runaway Prevention *Month*. Communities across the country sponsored activities to celebrate the month including: inviting lawmakers, media, and others to visit programs that serve youth, developing materials to educate youth, law enforcement officials and others about local resources available, and gathering to serve a Thanksgiving dinner to runaway and homeless youth living in shelters and transitional living programs.

Last year both the United States Senate and U.S. House of Representatives adopted resolutions commemorating National Runaway Prevention Month. In the 108th Congress, the House of Representatives has again demonstrated its support for the goals and ideals of the Month, adopting H. Res. 57 in March 2003.

The Honorable George W. Bush

DATE

Page Two

A Presidential Proclamation declaring a National Runaway Prevention Month has never been issued before. Such a proclamation will bring greater stature and visibility to the public awareness campaign by leveraging the power of the Presidency to motivate all members of society to support youth who have runaway, been turned away, or who are at-risk of running. The proclamation would certainly be consistent with your past actions in support of extremely vulnerable youth, such as your enactment of the PROTECT Act earlier this year and your convening of a White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children in fall 2002.

We are hopeful you will once again exercise visible leadership on children, youth and family matters by honoring our request that you issue a Presidential Proclamation designating November 2003 “National Runaway Prevention Month.”

Sincerely,

National Network for Youth
National Runaway Switchboard
YMCA National Safe Place

List Additional National Organizations Here
List State and Regional Organizations Here
List Local Organizations, including CBO, FBO, and public youth-serving agencies, Here

Additional information about National Runaway Prevention Month or this request can be obtained by contacting Maureen Blaha, Executive Director, National Runaway Switchboard, at 773/880-9860.