

Geoffrey O'Connor  
Guardian for Craig O'Connno  
48 Far Horizon  
Easton CT 06612  
November 24, 2015

Commissioner Murray  
Commissioner  
Department of Developmental Services  
460 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Murray:

My brother is institutionalized at Southbury training school. He has been a resident at the facility since 1957 when my parents transferred him from the infamous Willowbrook institution to Southbury training school. I am one of his legal guardians. His other guardian is my sister Kyrie O'Connor, Greenwich CT. We are both deeply concerned that about the future of Southbury training school.

**Recommendation 1: Do not close Southbury training school**

**Justification:** My brother is in cottage 17. He is severely retarded. He needs twenty four hour, seven day a week care to be able to wash, clothe and feed himself. The other members of the cottage have equivalent developmental state. The caregivers at Southbury training school are the reason that he is happy, healthy and still alive. The prompt availability of medical staff that is present on the grounds is another reason why he is happy, healthy and still alive. Because of my brother's developmental state, the physical state of the premises is not as high a priority as the care. I have seen a very beautiful group home. It is not the condition of the home that is important; it is the condition of the caregivers that make all the difference.

The caregivers at Southbury are state employees that are being paid a living salary with benefits that reduces turnover rate. This is vitally important to me and my sister. Craig's caregivers know him from day to day exposure over years on all three shifts of operation. They recognize signs of mood changes and agitation levels that can be communicated to medical staff for immediate follow up. This "direct connection" to Craig's well being has insured his continued good health and cannot be replaced at a group home. The staff of a group home will not be as stable because they are being paid "burger flipping" wages

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and have no benefits. I know this because I have asked about staff turnover rates at one group home.

The availability of prompt response of medical staff is another concern. There are medical personnel in Southbury training school. They can be with Craig quickly. A group home environment has medical teams, but I and my sister are concerned about the response time to assist Craig.

Recommendation 2: If Southbury is closed insure that the Southbury training school staff remains state employees and are given positions at group homes with no loss of compensation or benefits

Justification: These state employees will reduce the amount of turnover at the group homes and insure great care for the residents.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey O'Connor  
Guardian for Craig O'Connor

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