

NATIONAL
DISABILITY RIGHTS
NETWORK

Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities



December 11, 1008

The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Governor Kaine:

On behalf of the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), I would like add my endorsement to the proposal submitted by the *Virginia Alliance for Community*, which requests the redirection of the proposed expenditure of \$43 million in capital outlay funds to renovate the Central Virginia Training Center(CVTC) to “instead... build, acquire, and/or renovate state-operated community-based housing” for the residents of CVTC.

NDRN is the nonprofit membership organization for the federally mandated Client Assistance Program (CAP) and Protection and Advocacy (P&A) programs for individuals with disabilities. Collectively, the P&A/CAP network is the largest provider of legally based advocacy services to people with disabilities in the United States. Through training and technical assistance, legal support, and legislative advocacy, NDRN works to create a society in which children and adults with all types of disabilities and their families are afforded equality of opportunity and are able to fully participate in society by exercising choice and self-determination.

Last week, the Arc of the United States submitted a letter of support for the redirection of the CVTC funds. In that letter, Virginia’s poor rankings related to the investment in home and community based services versus institutional services for its citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities was highlighted. Virginia is a leader in best practices in business, government, and technology, and the time has come for Virginia to also be a leader in best practices for its citizens with disabilities.

I agree with the Alliance that the time for reform is now. Institutions are no longer an acceptable living arrangement for individuals with disabilities. No other states are rebuilding or engaging in large scale renovation of large institutions; Virginia is one of only 10 states that have not closed a single large state operated developmental facility despite the Commonwealth’s stated philosophical commitment to community-based services.

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I recognize that the families of individuals who reside in the state training centers are fearful of change. Other states have successfully navigated these challenges and have worked with these individuals and advocacy groups to ensure that their loved ones remain safe and in fact, enjoy a higher quality of life.

I hope you will give this proposal your close attention. One of the speakers at the recently sponsored Rally for Reform was quoted in local newspaper coverage and her words say it best, "No matter how many posters you put on a cinder block; an institution is not a home." Individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities deserve better.

Sincerely,



Curtis Decker, Executive Director