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IVCIL

Striving to enlighten the path
and enrich the journey
for persons with disabilities...

ILLINOIS VALLEY CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

18 Gunia Drive, LaSalle, Illinois 61301

RECEIVED

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HEALTH FACILITIES &
SERVICES REVIEW BOARD

September 19, 2013

Dear Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board,

My name is Edmund K. Leahy, and I am the Community Reintegration Coordinator at the Illinois Valley Center for Independent Living. IVCIL is a non-profit advocacy and service agency for persons with disabilities in Bureau, La Salle, Marshall, Putnam, and Stark Counties in Illinois. My position involves assisting persons with disabilities who are below the age of 60 years old in transitioning out of long-term care institutions into community-based services.

There are numerous joys in my endeavors: encouraging a consumer to accomplish a goal, meeting with supportive families, and seeing the hope in a consumer's eyes when a transition is progressing well. The most endearing ones are the smiles and peace of mind felt when consumers realize they now have a home of their own. Independence, freedom, choice, self-empowerment, responsibility, opportunity, and support are theirs. No more walls, isolation, limitations, dependence, boredom, barriers, or frustration. People who have transitioned enjoy the community supports and services available to them; oftentimes, these supports and services are what give people with disabilities their chance to be a contributing member of society. Without these community-based supports and services, these people would remain in institutions.

As a person with a disability, I encourage you to support the closing of the Warren G. Murray Developmental Center in Centralia. While living in Connecticut as a youth, I can remember Geraldo Rivera's eye-opening expose about the deplorable conditions prevalent in the Willowbrook State School in New York. If you've never watched the video "Unforgotten: Twenty-Five Years After Willowbrook," I recommend you do. I come from a long line of educators who taught children with disabilities; none of them would advocate for warehousing people with disabilities in state institutions. Dignity, pride, self-realization, opportunity, comprehensive education, peace of mind, and compassionate individualized care are frequently absent.

I urge you to close the Warren G. Murray Developmental Center in and the moving of its residents back into the community with appropriate community-based supports and services.

Respectfully yours,

Edmund K. Leahy

Edmund K. Leahy
Community Reintegration Coordinator

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