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July 29, 2015

To Whom It May Concern at the California Department of Developmental Services and Legislature:

My name is Jacqueline L. Smaldino. I am the younger sister of Kimberly Loustalot for whom I am writing this letter. Kimberly Loustalot has been a resident of the Sonoma Development Center (SDC) since 1966. My response is supplementing an earlier letter sent to you from our eldest sister, Renee Loustalot. Rather than repeat her sentiments which I share, please accept my personal appeal supporting the transformation of the SDC into a residential facility for current residents like our sister Kimberly. This letter is also being sent with the consent of our mother, Pearl Loustalot.

The present model is working. Closing the SDC is for budgetary reasons which discount the lives of innocent citizens who are unable to speak for themselves. They are being victimized by a bureaucratic process that is violating human rights when their needs must be met. The SDC as it exists is working to provide for these needs. These individuals did not choose to require special needs provided by the SDC. Why create havoc and dismantle it? Millions of dollars are being set aside in the state budget to build services for severely developmentally disabled patients moving from the SDC. Instead, why not keep it open and the money there? I cannot imagine a better way to allocate these funds than to provide for individuals depending on us to care for them.

Modernizing the existing facility will allow for new admissions and therefore be more inclusive of all special needs patients in our community, and nation as a whole, who are seeking the kind of help that the SDC offers. Proportionally reducing the existing model will allow for current residents and new admits to live in a scaled down version of community living at large with medical, dental and behavioral support. This includes a crisis center which at present is serving a very useful purpose.

Simply stated, mental illness exists in our community and nation. It will not go away. We have a moral, legal and financial obligation to provide for these citizens. Rules are made for those who break them. Why would a **Budget Trailer Bill Amendment to the Lanterman Act** be passed when no rules were broken? The law in question did not consider the after effects it will cause. In whose best interest was this law passed? Laws should be created for the greater good of those for whom they are intended. They can be changed by making a conscientious decision to make a difference. Each family whose child lives at the SDC has made a personal sacrifice to provide for the needs, wants and concerns of their children. As

the younger sister of Kimberly, despite being a labor of love, I know how challenging it can be on a family to have a sibling who is severely developmentally disabled. All we ask is that the state continues to subsidize the life sustaining provisions that the SDC offers Kimberly and those like her who need it.

**This is where the state must develop and continue to provide:**

- **We need a SDC site to provide medical, dental and behavioral support to the developmentally disabled (DD). Also we need to keep wheelchair repair there.**
- **This is key because these people are trained well in caring and understanding for our loved ones.**
- **We need housing for those who are not successful in community facilities. Because I do not want my sister or anyone else to go through what she did in the past. She has people who love and care for her at SDC.**
- **We want these services developed now! We need these to be developed now before there are problems and the kinks are worked out.**
- **We want our views and those of the Sonoma community and coalition to be heard and considered in making a plan for the future of SDC.**

I have not seen or been provided anything that remotely resembles the comprehensive quality of care, integrative services, and freedom to live in such a welcoming environment as the SDC which is least restrictive and safe. What is the assurance that the basic level of care these patients need and require will be there in the years to come without the SDC? In general, media is culture. Unfortunately, our own community's culture is attempting to address this issue on its own without the benefit of media support. Therefore, this issue is lacking the consensus opinion of the general populace who know little or nothing about it.

In closing, my sister's medical and mental needs are so severe, that only a facility like the SDC can provide for her. Its skilled personnel range from care givers, to physicians, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, paraprofessionals, psychologists, and social workers who dedicate themselves to many patients like Kimberly. Continuity of care is critical to the lives of these individuals. Where will these patients find this level of comprehensive care outside of the SDC? My mother, sister Renee, and I implore you to reconsider your decision on behalf of innocent souls seeking this help. In Africa, there is an old adage which states, "When elephants fight, the grass gets hurt". Rather than victimizing its patients, we beseech you to rescind the decision to close the SDC and recommend instead that it be transformed for good.

Yours Sincerely,

Jacqueline L. Smaldino