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SONOMA GROUP

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Diana Dooley, California Health and Human Services Secretary  
c/o DDS Developmental Centers Division  
Attn: Cindy Coppage,  
1600 9th Street, MS 3-17, Sacramento, CA 95814  
via e-mail to Sonoma.closure@dds.ca.gov

August 28, 2015

**RE: Transforming the Sonoma Developmental Center in Glen Ellen, CA**

Dear Secretary Dooley,

The Sierra Club Sonoma Group is part of the Redwood Chapter, and is made up of Sierra Club members who live in Sonoma County. The Sierra Club is a grassroots, volunteer-led organization with a mission to explore, enjoy and protect the planet.

When considering the transformation of the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) in Glen Ellen, the Sierra Club Sonoma Group urges you to engage in a collaborative process between Sonoma County and the State that allows us to shape the future of SDC together through dialogue, compromise and a willingness to be innovative and take the necessary time to get things right.

**Guide the transformation process with a mission statement**

As a first step in this direction, Sierra Club joins with the Transform SDC Coalition in urging you to include a vision and mission statement for a “transformed” SDC in the proposed closure plan that reflects the community vision expressed at the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Transform SDC Workshop in Sonoma.

Two key elements that must be prioritized in the SDC plan include:

- On-site housing and health care services for existing clients should be developed concurrently with transformation of the facility.
- Protection of the invaluable natural resources land of SDC should be developed concurrently with transformation of the facility.

Sierra Club supports the creation of a public-private partnership to oversee the SDC, driven by community ideas and values, that showcases the site's history, maintains critical services for the developmentally disabled and preserves the natural resources and open space of the site.

### **Preserve the critically important natural resources of SDC**

The Sonoma Developmental Center is situated in the heart of the Sonoma Valley Wildlife Corridor, one of California's more biologically diverse critical linkages for wildlife. The 950-acre SDC site is a key link in the 10,000-acre wildlife corridor from Sonoma Mountain east across Sonoma Valley to the Mayacamas. It is also a pinchpoint for important regional habitat and open space lands that stretch from the new Berryessa-Snow Mountain Wilderness Monument to the Golden Gate Recreation Area and Marin Headlands along the coast.

The SDC lands on their own support a mosaic of plant communities including mixed evergreen forests and redwood groves, deciduous oak woodlands, riparian corridors along Sonoma Creek, grassland with scattered mature oaks, and wetlands.

The rich assortment of vegetation provides habitat to a range of common and rare species including 129 bird species, 11 species of amphibians, 16 species of reptiles and 43 species of animals.

These lands also provide recreational opportunities for SDC residents, for the community and visitors, including walking, bird-watching, horseback riding and enjoyment of nature.

### **A collaborative approach will benefit all affected communities**

With a collaborative approach, the SDC could be transformed into a center of excellence for caring and providing wellness for current residents and others in the community who need special medical and supportive services such as specialty shoe making and other specialty services.

Sierra Club urges the Department of Developmental Services to take a holistic view of the Sonoma Developmental Center and work toward a resolution that meets the needs of the current residents, the community, and the environment.

Sincerely yours,

Suzanne Doyle  
*Chair, Sierra Club Sonoma Group*