

SAMPLE LETTER FOR SDC CLOSURE PLAN COMMENTS WITH A FOCUS ON
LAND AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

Date

Department of Developmental Services
Attn: Cindy Coppage
1600 9th Street, Room 340, M.S. 3-17
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on Sonoma Developmental Center Closure Plan

Dear Director Rogers and Ms. Coppage:

I am submitting these written comments for your consideration as you develop the closure plan for the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) that will be submitted by your Department to the Legislature for its review on or before October 1, 2015.

In addition to these comments, I also support the SDC Coalition written comments filed with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) on August 7, 2015. In particular, I support the Coalition's proposed vision statement for the future of SDC:

Create a public-private partnership driven by community ideas and values that showcases the site's history, maintains critical services for the developmentally disabled, provides opportunities for creative reuse of SDC's assets, and preserves the natural resources and open space of the site.

The August 7th SDC Coalition comments are a comprehensive set of recommendations that, if adopted as part of the closure plan, will ensure the well-being of the current residents, create future job opportunities for SDC employees and set the stage for the permanent protection of the tremendous open space and natural resource assets of the SDC property.

I care deeply about the future of SDC because **[in your own words describe why SDC is important to you. What is your personal connection to the property and/or the people of SDC?]**. In particular, I strongly urge DDS and the State to recognize in the closure plan that the future of SDC residents, staff and the land are all connected.

The SDC property is unique among the State's developmental centers because it includes approximately 750 acres of open space and natural resource lands on Sonoma Mountain and in the Sonoma Valley. The site also provides significant public benefits to the region, including water and groundwater capacity, climate change resiliency, wildlife corridor and habitat protection, scenic qualities and access to open space that supports human health. The site is bounded by state and county parks and other protected land, connected to an existing regional trail system, and identified as a critical wildlife corridor.

The open space and natural lands of the property have been a directly beneficial to the well-being of the SDC residents and employees and the neighboring communities. The site is widely utilized by the community for recreation and enjoyment. Its tranquil setting and the ability for SDC's developmentally disabled clients to get outside, walk around and enjoy

nature has provided peace of mind and therapeutic benefits for residents, and for the family members and guardians who care deeply about their loved ones.

In order to fully assess and protect these resources, it is essential that the State:

- Coordinate a complete biological and cultural resource assessments of the SDC property with the California Department of General Services (DGS), the Legislature and the California Natural Resources Agency, that builds on the work of the April 2014 “Sonoma Developmental Center Draft Resource Assessment” and share the data with SDC Coalition and the general public
- Work with Sonoma County and the SDC Coalition to prepare a summary of the property’s contributions towards the State’s environmental goals in the areas of how access to nature benefits public health, water management and conservation, climate change and habitat and natural resource protection.
- Initiate a collaborative process with DGS, the California Natural Resources Agency, California State Parks, Sonoma County and interested stakeholders to ensure permanent protection of the critical open space lands on the SDC site.

[If you have any additional recommendations that you would like to offer, please add them to this bullet list.]

The Sonoma Valley community is united in the belief that the State should not simply close SDC and sell the land as surplus property. This is a unique property, and it calls for a unique planning approach. Please incorporate these recommendations into the closure plan, and thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

Your name and address

Please send email or hard copy versions of your comments to Supervisor Susan Gorin and Senator Mike McGuire.

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