

AFSCME Vows Opposition to Governor's Plan to Shutter State Department of Mental Retardation Facilities

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BOSTON - Council 93 The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME Council 93) today expressed strong opposition to an announcement by the Patrick Administration to close four of the state's six Department of Mental Retardation residential facilities.

"We are extremely disappointed with this reckless and heartless decision by Governor Patrick," said Council 93 Executive Director Anthony Caso. "We firmly believed that these types of assaults on essential public services ended with the Romney Administration. Unfortunately, we were wrong."

Governor Patrick's plan calls for the closure of the Fernald Development Center in Waltham; the Glavin Regional Center in Shrewsbury; the Monson Development Center in Palmer; and the Templeton Developmental Center in Baldwinville. Administration officials said the closure plan would be implemented over the next four years.

"These facilities are in existence for a reason, Caso said. "Many of the parents and guardians of the residents have stated repeatedly that their loved ones cannot receive the level of care they need in a community setting. And, our members who provide around-the-clock care for these men and women know these parents and guardians are right."

Caso noted that the governor's plan would impact approximately 4,500 members and added that these dedicated and compassionate public employees would have the support of AFSCME's 40,000 members across the state. "All of our members will mobilize against this effort," Caso said.

Massachusetts AFL-CIO President Robert Haynes also noted his strong opposition to the plan and said his organization will also aggressively oppose the closures. "We are deeply disappointed in the governor today," Haynes said. "The economic crisis we are experiencing requires some tough decisions but this is clearly the wrong choice. We should not and can not try to solve our financial problems on the backs of the people that need this critical care and the workers who provide it. As the voice of more than 400,000 working men and women in this state we will do everything in our power to convince the governor and other decision makers that this is bad public policy."

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