

January 23, 2009

His Excellency Deval Patrick
Office of the Governor
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

His Excellency Timothy Murray
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
State House, Room 360
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Families and Friends of the Glavin Regional Center – Request for Meeting

Dear Governor Patrick and Lieutenant Governor Murray:

I am writing in response to your decision to close the Glavin Regional Center over the course of the next four and a half years. I disagree with your decision and request your reconsideration.

I believe that this facility contributes a great deal to the welfare of some of the neediest individuals with developmental disabilities who live in the Commonwealth. I, along with the many families of Glavin residents, raise the following reasons to keep the Center open, and we encourage you to visit the Glavin Regional Center to learn first-hand about the unique nature of support provided there.

1.) The “community system” of care offers valuable support to families and individuals working to fully exercise their citizenship. The Glavin Regional Center operates as a backup to the community system, for those individuals whose behavioral and mental health needs exceed those that can be safely and adequately addressed in the community. The Center has performed this task well for many years, achieving a strong success rate. For example, in 1993, when the Departments of Mental Retardation and Mental Health divided, the Glavin Regional Center took 19 people out of mental health hospitals from around the Commonwealth in that one year. Since then the facility has provided the expertise and treatment for people with advanced needs who have been living in the community system. This is possible to do without increasing census because an equal number of people are discharged back to their communities after a successful treatment period. The alternatives to Glavin are typically to maintain individuals in a crisis state within their group homes, or to have multiple admissions through emergency rooms to the psychiatric units at local hospitals. These stays are time limited as are the number of available beds. This creates waiting lists and forces short stays where the treatment must rely on starting new medication regimens. People in this situation often end up on many medications without long term benefit.

2.) The Glavin Regional Center is the newest of the state facilities, the smallest, and is most efficient as a physical plant. Little is needed for capital improvement, translating to minimal costs for upgrades in the near future. To close the facility after the recent investments would be a waste.

3.) Admissions to the facility have occurred regularly each year when permitted by the Department of Mental Retardation. This indicates an existing need for regular support to the

community system. Oftentimes, people admitted to the facility have been maintained in the community system for several years at costs far exceeding the cost of living at Glavin. This is easily verified by the cost of two recent placements from the facility into the community. Thus, both cost efficiency and treatment efficacy support maintaining the Glavin facility as a backup to the community system.

4.) The Glavin Regional Center has been an important and vibrant part of the Central Massachusetts community, in particular in the Town of Shrewsbury. Under the most recently retired Director, the facility established cooperative arrangements with the town soccer and baseball organizations. This practice has fostered the integration of local families with residents at the facility. At a recent informational meeting to discuss the closing, town residents with no relatives at the facility expressed their dismay that the justification for closing would be integration into the community system. They maintained that their families, especially younger members, viewed residents as friends when they came to use the grounds. Glavin residents have long been members of local churches, supported by the clergy and the congregation. A farmer who plants crops on the grounds donates vegetables and a wagon for residents of Glavin to use at the Fall Festival in Shrewsbury, where residents not only sell produce but become integrated with the larger community at a major social event. Some residents hold jobs in town, while others attend community colleges and night classes. Some residents volunteer at a local food bank on Rt. 9 so they can help others who they know are needier than they. Still others volunteer to read at local elementary schools to young students. Closing Glavin will deprive the community and these residents of their established connections, as well as the clinical supports which make this participation possible.

5.) For families who have elected to have family members come to Glavin because of repeated problems in the community, giving them the forced choice of private vendor or larger institution at Wrentham is not a real choice. They have gone through the community system with unpleasant outcomes, and they do not wish to trade a small facility with community access and support for a much larger institution.

6.) Each person living at Glavin has a story to tell and it is a tale of frustration suffering prior on the road to finding Glavin. Their families have a renewed sense of faith and trust in the ability of state government to support their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, after having spent years fighting for the proper care. To site a few personal histories, one person who held the record highest number of restraints per year in the entire DMR system came to Glavin, and within a year the restraints were at zero. Another lady came to Glavin when no other facility or community provider would accept her. She is learning to live safely and can now go outside without serious difficulty, but still requires 2 to 6 staff to help her perform most basic of life activities without causing harm to herself or others. Recently, she spent Christmas at a home of a staff person without any incident. These are just a couple of cases where the Glavin Regional Center provides for people with positive approaches, without punitive techniques, and enables individuals to achieve more meaningful and productive lives.

7.) The Glavin Regional Center recently built two homes in Shrewsbury for resident from the community, Fernald, and Glavin. The facility developed excellent relationships with the Housing Authority and more cooperative ventures are possible, showing Glavin expertise in community living systems and giving more opportunities to individuals with significant needs to live in smaller homes as part of continuity of care.

On behalf of the friends and family members of Glavin residents, I am specifically requesting both your reconsideration of the decision to close Glavin, and a personal meeting with you and representatives of the Glavin residents. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Karyn E. Polito
State Representative
11th Worcester

CC: Friends and Family of Glavin Residents
Town of Shrewsbury