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October 2, 2019

Bruce R. Beemer, Inspector General
8th Floor, Forum Place
555 Walnut Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear General Beemer:

On the morning of August 14, the Secretary of the Department of Human Services, Teresa Miller, announced the plan to close both Polk and White Haven State Centers. Those of us in the legislature who represent the centers were notified that same morning, only hours before. Most troubling to us, was that the Department did not consult a single center resident or family member prior to this decision, nor were employee caregivers at the centers asked about the plan, or the prudence of relocating the centers' residents. From the very outset, we have had serious concerns about how the Department came to the decision to close the centers.

Subsequent to the announcement, the Department held two perfunctory public hearings, as required by Act 3 of 1999, and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, the standing oversight committee, held a public hearing. These hearings have only raised more questions about the integrity of the decision making process at the Department. One concern in particular is the potential conflict of interest between the Department's Director of the Bureau of State Operated Facilities, who was directly involved in the decision to close Polk and White Haven and the Selinsgrove State Center Director, one of two centers to remain open. During the Senate hearing, the Deputy Secretary of the Office of Developmental programs stated that the relationship was disclosed to her, but she could not confirm if that relationship was disclosed to the Office of General Counsel or if a ruling was made as to whether the Director of the Bureau of State Operated Facilities should recuse himself from deliberations on this matter.

In addition, the Department's rationale for how it announced the decision was so that it could adequately prepare for employee transition; however, subsequent meetings have made clear that the Department is still in the process of developing a plan for the centers' employees. In fact, until September 25th, over a month after the closure announcement, the Department had no meetings with the leadership of AFSME Council 13, the union that represents the majority of the centers' employees.

The Department's decision to close both Polk and White Have State Centers could have life-or-death consequences for the residents who reside there. Due to the seriousness of the issue we believe a full investigation of the Department's deliberations and decision-making process is warranted.

Sincerely,



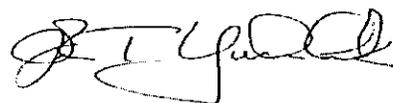
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