

Thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is John DeFrance. I am here to ask you to keep Cedarcrest Hospital and the Blue Hills chemical detoxification center open. I am a retired surgeon who practiced in the Danbury area for 33 years. My wife and I have an autistic son who has been a patient at Cedarcrest for several years. Cedarcrest has been the only suitable facility that can care for our son safely.

Looking at autism alone, when our son was born autism occurred in one in 10,000 births. It is now diagnosed in 1 in every 150 births. A large number of autistic children and young adults are making their way through our poorly prepared public education systems, and they will soon need care that cannot be provided by aging parents and marginal to nonexistent community services. More facilities like Cedarcrest will be needed!

Having been a surgeon with a special interest in trauma, I am very familiar with the pressures the mentally ill and chemically addicted place on hospital emergency rooms and psychiatric services. Many times the patient is sent to a homeless shelter due to lack of in-patient beds and detoxification facilities. This is not good

medicine and it is not humane. These beds are needed and if anything, more should be provided.

We live in Newtown, where there was once a large psychiatric facility called Fairfield Hills Hospital. After the closure of the hospital, a rapid rise in the homeless population occurred in the surrounding communities. Of course, many of those homeless people are former patients from Fairfield Hills Hospital. Ironically, part of the grounds of the old facility houses the Garner State Prison whose inmates predominately have mental health problems. Proper in-patient psychiatric care likely would have prevented the mentally ill from committing crimes. Even as an economic issue it is less expensive to treat the mentally ill than to incarcerate them.

Please do not close Cedarcrest Hospital and the Blue Hills detoxification facility. Discharging these patients with a bag of pills that they likely will not take is a disservice to this very vulnerable population and to your constituents.

Thank you again for allow me to speak.