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Record

## **Statement from Phyllis Kuhn to Program Review and Investigations Committee**

**Public Hearing February 22, 2012**

It is all about the money.

For several years, our family has seen what was initially an insidious effort to move residents out of Southbury Training School. Why? The state and some "do gooders" believe this is in the best interest of the residents. It is not. The people that want their children and siblings in a "home" rather than institution can do so. So please STOP pushing their beliefs down our throats. We simply do not feel the same way. My brother, Victor, was a resident at Southbury his entire life, from when he was five, until he passed away two years ago from pancreatic cancer. This was the one place he could function with some freedom, walking the grounds safely. Every two weeks, without fail, my mother would drive to Southbury from our home in Bridgeport to visit Vicky. Sis and I would often accompany her. After mom passed, Sis took up the banner and faithfully visited or brought Vicky home every two weeks and holidays for the next fifteen years.

It is all about the money.

Each resident has funds allocated for care from Social Security. Each resident is cared for by a caring and experienced staff. Each resident has access to excellent and 24 hr medical care by individual familiar with them. Many services are provided, allowing them to even work off campus. No, it is not the same in community homes. many residents need intense supervision and oversight. Those that provide it are themselves overseen. This oversight of personnel is absent in the community setting.

Believing this is not important is extremely naive. People employed in the community setting are paid poorly and have a tremendous responsibility. They have little backup. Some individuals like to abuse those who are weaker. These settings provide the opportunity.

It is important that we get this protective legislation enacted. The administration is starting to ratchet up the pressure on families and guardians to move their loved ones out of STS and into community-based group homes, which don't operate under the same federal standards of care. An internal DDS memo, which we just received under a Freedom of Information Act request, projects that more than 20 residences and cottages at STS will be closed over the next four years, and that by 2021, just nine years from now, the entire campus will be virtually shut down.

Why? To carve out a little more \$ from the system to allocate to a different cause.

Let's not be naive. The money is important. The most logical approach to the problem is not to decrease the residents, but dramatically increase the residents at the school. This will provide a revenue source to off set expenses. Create a five year plan to make this facility outstanding. It can be the center for care of the entire nation and something the state can truly be proud of.

Dr. Phyllis Kuhn  
(Sister of Victor Wall deceased-former resident SBTS)