

March 16, 2015

IN RE: SB 1088

Dear Legislators;

I am the legal guardian of my uncle, Jacob Kussner. Jacob has been a resident of Southbury Training School since 1952, the same year I was born. My mother, Shirley Kussner, cared for Jacob as a teenager and became his legal guardian when her parents passed away. Shirley worked for many years as a physician in Milford, CT, and often visited Jacob at Southbury. When she died, I was happy to take on the legal and moral responsibility for his care. Jacob has been my ward for most of the past twenty years, if not longer.

Jacob has spent nearly all of his adult life at Southbury Training School. I have visited him there scores of times, in every season and in various circumstances. I generally like to call ahead to make sure Jacob is on campus and not away on a vocational or recreational program, but I have also dropped in unannounced, and in every case my experience is the same. I am uniformly impressed with the level of care and attention given to Jacob, and with the training, competency, and friendliness of the staff.

I would particularly like to single out Rob Weinstein, who is my direct administrative contact at Southbury, and Jacob's physician, Dr. Joel Melamed, for their attention and care. I know that both of these gentlemen are available at almost any time of day and night to update me on any aspect of Jacob's condition. It is particularly helpful to know that both Mr. Weinstein and Dr. Melamed have known Jacob for many years, and are able to inform his care from the perspective of Jacob's long history at Southbury. I have been similarly pleased to discover, when talking to the staff, that many have been there for decades, and are thus able to provide a continuity of care that I believe is particularly and personally important to Jacob, and to many others in his condition.

I am well aware that Southbury Training School is not a paradise. The facility is old, and has various maintenance issues that are entirely evident. It is a shame to find it, as I currently do, quite underused. But it is also a lovely and peaceful setting for a group of individuals that I do know are able to appreciate its merits, and in particular to enjoy a very high level of personal care from individuals who are devoted to them both personally and professionally.

My uncle Jacob was very recently taken quite ill. It seemed, frankly, that he might not survive a bout of pneumonia, for which he was hospitalized and given intravenous antibiotics at Waterbury Hospital. Jacob is 88 years old, and I know that many men and

women of his age do succumb to a respiratory infection. It is really a great testament to both Waterbury Hospital and the medical caregivers at Southbury that when I visited Jacob this past weekend, he was alert, in great spirits, and seemed fully recovered. He was genuinely and obviously happy to be at the place he calls home. I consider that, without the specialized, 24-hour nursing care and long-term medical relationships Jacob enjoys at Southbury, the outcome may have been quite different.

I urge all legislators and administrators charged with the care of Jacob, and those like him, to carefully consider the consequences of closing Southbury Training School, and to vote in favor of its continued survival. I know that it has meant the world to Jacob, and that it is a world worth keeping.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence Rapoport