

cc: Mr. Bolloni ✓

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April 23, 1975

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FOR RETARDED CITIZENS

Mr. Roger E. Buchanan, Chairman
Right to Education Committee
Pennsylvania Association for Retarded
Citizens
1500 North Second Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102

Dear Mr. Buchanan:

Thank you for your letter of April 4, 1975, indicating the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens' response to the "Modular Unit Plan," submitted by Mr. Harry Herman, Superintendent of Ebensburg State School and Hospital. As you indicated, there are two separate issues discussed and I will respond to both.

Upon reviewing the proposed plan, and the subsequent justification by Mr. Andrew Vaveris, it is my opinion that there is no evidence of planned "permanence." The proposal clearly states that "the overall goal of the transition services would be to gradually expose and train the students in handling situations they encounter in subsequent community class placements." The utilization of the units in this manner is not contrary to the ultimate goal of community integration supported by both the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens and this Department. The fact that 350 students presently attend classes at the Ebensburg Borough School indicates our determination to seek this integration. The proposed utilization of the Vinco Elementary School in September by an additional 150 students further emphasizes our commitment.

While the Department does not support the arbitrary placement of the demountable units on the grounds of every State School and Hospital, it will individually support their development when the investigation of all other options are clearly documented as unacceptable. I concur with the State Task Force's position that the most desirable class placement for all mentally retarded children is within the regular elementary or secondary school building. I also, however, share the viewpoint of Secretary Pittenger, expressed in his memorandum of April 8, 1975, to the Task Force Committee that we cannot unilaterally exclude other options, even though they are less desirable. The Department of Public Welfare will support the placement of demountable units at a State School and Hospital when 1) all other, more acceptable community options have been investigated, determined to be

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unacceptable and documented, and/or 2) in the opinion of a staff physician, it is not medically advisable for a student to attend educational classes off-grounds. In both instances, the demountable units provide a viable, temporary alternative to the "basement classrooms" presently characteristic in our State Schools and Hospitals.

The need to utilize the units at Ebensburg State School and Hospital has not been determined to date. I have requested Mr. Herman and Mr. Robert Vogt, the Central Regional Commissioner for Mental Retardation, to investigate the present and projected educational situation. Their recommendations and justifications will be forwarded to me for my review. Based upon this review, I will make a decision relative to placement of the Units.

The second issue of providing educational services to those residents over 21 years of age is a major concern of this Department. The increasing number of residents reaching this age requires that additional educational opportunities and appropriate space be explored and provided. This must occur if we are to continue to meet the educational, developmental goals of the individual. I am suggesting that representatives from both the Office of Mental Retardation and the State School and Hospital Superintendents meet, at the earliest possible time, with representatives from the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens to discuss this situation. The development of a plan of action with appropriate implementation delineated, is a matter of great concern.

Thank you for your expressed concerns and please be assured that I share your desire to provide quality educational services to all of the residents of our State Schools and Hospitals.

Very truly yours,

Frank S. Beal

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cc: Mr. Beal

Mr. Meyers

Mr. Elser

Mr. Polloni - Executive Director - Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens