

427 Vermont Avenue  
Erie, Pennsylvania 16505  
April 24, 1973

Ms. Helen Wohlgemuth  
Secretary of Welfare  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Ms. Wohlgemuth,

I am a Special Education teacher and have a severely retarded daughter living at Polk State School. Therefore, I feel more than qualified to express my great distress caused by your recent firing of Dr. James McClelland, superintendent of Polk State School.

Your abrupt action indicates to me that you have very little intimate knowledge of severely and profoundly retarded children and adults. There are individuals who require close supervision and partial confinement in a play-pen-like enclosure for their safety and the safety of others. This is not cruel and inhumane, it is sensible action taken for safety. Some of the children and adults do require rather heavy medication at various times because of severely aggressive behavior.

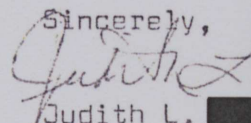
It is my opinion, and the opinion of various professional persons that I have discussed this matter with, that partial confinement used in conjunction with some medication is far preferable, more humane, and more sensible course of action. This gives aides and teachers the opportunity to work with and try to help the residents.

Play pens are used by many parents of young children to keep them safe and not isolated. Many residents of Polk are still very young children though they are physically mature.

My daughter is and has been receiving excellent care at Polk. Dr. McClelland is responsible for a fine program of high quality care for all the patients in his care. I do not understand how you can possibly charge him with inhumane treatment. He could not possibly have held his position at Polk as administrator for so long a time or be so highly respected by his employees, parents of patients, professionals in his field, and many other people, if your charges were true.

I believe that you have made a very serious error in judgement. It is my sincere wish that you reconsider this extremely serious decision and reinstate Dr. McClelland at Polk so that he can continue to administer a program which is progressive, thoughtful, and has great concern for the welfare and best interests of its residents.

Sincerely,

  
Judith L. [redacted]