

*To Helen O'Brian -
Any Response?*

*Rr
10/27/79*

Robert Nelkin
4519 Sequoia Drive
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17109

October 27, 1979

The Honorable Dick Thornburgh
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 17120

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DEPT. OF
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SECRETARY'S OFFICE
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Dear Dick :

Five months have passed since the United States District Court ordered that community services be provided to each of the sixty-one (61) children, who then resided at Pennhurst. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth continues to deny these children of their right to minimally adequate habilitation.

Since the June 8th 1979 order, as many children left Pennhurst by dying as left Pennhurst by purposeful planning. Two (2) children have been provided community services. Two (2) children died. And despite the Welfare Department's stated priority to serve the children, fifty-seven (57) school-age residents remain at Pennhurst.

While I suspect that the Welfare Department would blame this lack of progress on someone else, the Department is culpable. The Welfare Department, representing the Commonwealth and you, has repeatedly violated this Federal Court order by failing to perform basic functions, which, notably, are also required by state law and regulations.

As Pennsylvania's chief executive, you might want to know : why the Commonwealth is defying a federal judge's order, when it is easy to comply ; why the Commonwealth is defaulting on its responsibility to these retarded children ; and why the Commonwealth has not been able to move more than two Pennhurst children to appropriate community services in nearly a half of a year.

I remain hopeful that you and your administration will be sensitive to the needs of retarded citizens and successful in accomplishments on their behalf.

Sincerely,

Robert Nelkin
Your Friend