



August 21, 2007

Dear Director Olszewski,

In recent months, you have received numerous letters from organizations such as the Michigan Disability Rights Coalition, United Cerebral Palsy, Michigan Protection and Advocacy and the ARC of Michigan regarding the Mt. Pleasant Regional Center. Disability Network/Michigan stands in support of these organizations and similarly opposes the continued existence of such an archaic setting.

In recent history, the State of Michigan has successfully transitioned thousands of people with disabilities from institutions to community settings. Most of these individuals are now thriving and are able to contribute meaningfully to our society. Furthermore, we now have the capacity to provide increased and higher quality supports to people to enable them to live in their own homes. As you are aware, the current cost to provide services to individuals at the Mt. Pleasant Center is approximately \$540 a day. Additionally, 60% of this cost is borne by Michigan taxpayers, and NOT the CMH providers that arrange the placements. Respectfully, I must question: what right does the Department of Community Services have to rob taxpayers not only of their dollars but of the talents of these individuals as well?

More appropriate and cost-effective options are available that would truly fulfill the Mt. Pleasant Center's mission to "empower individuals to achieve independence and personal aspirations". In fact, the current funding that is used to pay for a resident's stay at the Mt. Pleasant Center is enough to afford that person their own living space and 24-hour staff!

Finally, and most importantly, it is immoral and unjust to force people to live in this facility. Clearly, research has shown that institutionalization is ineffective and dangerous for those who live in such settings. The 2005 death of Robert Allen Wright II is only the latest and most dramatic evidence of this fact. The Mt. Pleasant Center claims to accord all individuals respect and basic human dignity, yet, I wonder if Robert Wright felt such respect and dignity as he lay in a bathtub, naked and bruised from several days of abuse, bleeding internally and left alone while his caregiver went to lunch?

Director Olszewski, I urge you to close the doors to this facility before more lives are lost, basic human rights are at stake.

Sincerely,

James K. Magyar  
Executive Director  
Disability Network/Michigan

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