

SENATE OF VIRGINIA



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July 11, 2014

The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

I have very mixed reactions to Commissioner Ferguson's July 1 letter regarding the Northern Virginia Training Center.

It has been obvious for over a year that the deadline for closing NVTC was unrealistic. It was causing great distress for families as they worried about the future of their loved ones. Their concerns for the safety and wellbeing of residents have frankly not been adequately addressed or even taken seriously by DBHDS. I commend you for delaying the closing.

However, I am alarmed by the proposal to sell the whole site. I urge you to reconsider this premature decision.

As you know, the SB 627 workgroup has just begun its work. Its focus is to determine whether or not we should have more than one Training Center in Virginia. In addition, the joint House and Senate task group formed to address the issues resulting from the closures has not finished its work. I serve on that task group and can assure you there are many concerns about the direction Virginia is headed.

It has long been my opinion that the long term solution is to have a modern, scaled back training center here in Northern Virginia for those who cannot reasonably be housed in small group homes. Such a village now exists in Tidewater.

The NVTC site is very valuable and would be hard to replace. It was purchased by parents of residents to provide a stable home for their children. Many of the families are outraged that it is being proposed for sale when the future of their relatives is so uncertain. The kind of village I envision would not require the whole site, but would need part of it.

So, please, delay the efforts to sell the property until a decision is made on where to house these very frail and disabled Virginians.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet Howell". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a prominent initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Janet Howell

cc: Debra Ferguson