

**From:** Kathleen Arthurs, Christopher McHugh, Donna McHugh

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 17, 2014

**To:** Ferguson, Debra (DBHDS); Cochran, Connie (DBHDS)

**Subject:** Comments for SB627 Committee

My brother, Joseph (Joey), has lived and thrived at the Northern Virginia Training Center (NVTC) for over forty years. It is his residence, and the NVTC staff and resources there have truly made it his HOME.

My parents, and other parents, back before the building of NVTC realized that there was NO facility or resources available in Northern Virginia that would meet their son's needs—and that my brother's only choice would have been to move out of Northern Virginia and go to what is now Central Virginia Training Center (CVTC). So, through great effort the Parents acquired the land, in good faith, submitted plans and partnered with the Commonwealth of Virginia to have NVTC built so that their children's needs and goals could be met, providing safety, and proximity to their family and friends.

The Parents & Associates of NVTC along with many of its members, including my parents, have been involved and succeeded at increasing community resources for over 40+ years. This includes getting law 94142 passed. Although we have been waiting for community resources/residences that meets Joe's needs, to date there has been no progress including the potential 2 houses being proposed in Arlington, VA. Joe was "assessed" and at present there are no "comparable" group home resources available to match his needs and services. NVTC continues to be the best, most viable "safety net" level of care and opportunity for my brother, and many others in Northern Virginia.

I applaud the actions of the Northern Virginia Training Center Parents & Advisory Board, who are very strong supporters of additional community resources, while trying to preserve the concept of NVTC in a "right sized" format.

I also commend the Commonwealth of Virginia's legislature for their establishment of the SB627 Committee. It is imperative that this committee be able to complete an honest evaluation and submit their report. I believe the closure deadline extension for NVTC is a great start - HOWEVER - the rash idea that the land (@NVTC) is now considered surplus is very frightening and in a TOTAL OPPOSITE direction of the legislators wishes, and "ties" the hands of the SB627 committee. The land and resources at NVTC are precious and are very likely the only leverage and real options we presently have to achieve Community placement goals while continuing to offer real CHOICES and SAFEGUARDS for our most severely disabled loved ones.

I am glad that my parents, and many other parents, worked so hard to create and improve many of the resources like NVTC, group homes, job & life skill training, and transportation opportunities like "Fastran", etc. I sincerely hope that other resources and services are developed, not dismantled, that will help my brother and many of his peers succeed. I strongly encourage the DBHDS to retain the training centers, their resources, and their irreplaceable staffs.

The Commonwealth of Virginia needs to fully utilize, integrate and expand the resources available at NVTC today. After right-sizing, and upgrading, NVTC can and should be easily shared by a variety of deserving community partners including the Autistic Community, and groups such as Wounded Warriors, etc. The land, the medical & dental facilities, the swimming pool are just a few of the resources that should easily be preserved and deployed to solving a vast variety of needs in Northern Virginia. Join us and let Northern Virginia Training (NVTC) reach its full and true Potential!