

October 7, 2014

*James B. Anzalone
309 Dunkirk Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21212*

RE: Support for Holly Center

Dear Maryland Officials and Citizens,

As the former director of Rosewood Center, it breaks my heart to see that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is now targeting Holly Center for closure. DHMH has for several years adopted a strategy of closing as many in-patient facilities as possible. While I agree whole heartedly with the placement of the mentally and intellectually disabled in the least restrictive setting possible, DHMH is not facing the reality that some individuals need the in-patient setting for care. By choosing to close all facilities, DHMH is taking away the in-patient choice for consumers and is doing a great injustice to the individual, the families and the citizens of the State of Maryland.

The closing of Rosewood is a perfect example of the terrible consequences of closing a facility. For the individuals who have long term medical and intellectual disabilities, there is no doubt that their transfer to the community hastened the death of many. DHMH will not recognize their responsibility for this, but moving those individuals to the community was a death sentence for many of them.

For the forensic population at Rosewood, DHMH at least established two SETT units, where today, they still have a similar number of forensic individuals as Rosewood had when it closed. Unfortunately, every week, the local jails throughout Maryland receive new inmates who were DDA clients who cannot make it in the community. As a result of DHMH's reckless approach of placing people in the community who do not belong there, they subject the community to acts that these individuals commit. They shatter the lives of the individuals by putting them in jails and prisons where they do not belong.

Every day, I talk with the families and friends of incarcerated mentally and intellectually disabled individuals who are so frustrated and dismayed by the failure of DHMH to provide the type of services that their loved ones need. The pain and anguish that this DHMH policy brings to families throughout Maryland is unconscionable.

It is time for DHMH to recognize that the closing of Holly Center and the other in-patient facilities for both DDA and DHMH will result in more premature deaths, more pain for the families of the individuals, more needless incarceration of the mentally and intellectually disabled and will result in greater social costs for all the victims of the acts those individuals commit in the community. It is time for DHMH to recognize that its policies have not worked and that Holly Center must not close.

Sincerely,

James B. Anzalone