

Theresa Utton-Jerman

Subject: Re Middlesex Replacement Facility

I write in opposition to the Middlesex Replacement Facility.

I am a former state hospital patient who has been subjected to restraints and seclusion innumerable times, both at VPCH and elsewhere. Restraints were ALWAYS punitive and a form of retribution never used to keep me or anyone else safer. Nurses lied about their need to use restraints “strictly for safety”, when in fact they use them in anger and because they get fed up with patients they perceive as difficult. I know whereof I speak...

The notion of setting up a locked involuntary “residence” that is different from a hospital “in intention only” but in no other way, is a travesty and makes a mockery of real Vermont needs— for respite centers like Alyssum and for low-income supportive housing. How many of your locked residential unit residents do you suppose will come from stable housing situations? Very very few, I daresay. That ought to tell you something.

Forced treatment and restraints and seclusion worsen every situation and once you forcibly subject someone to “treatment” you have irreparably shattered any hope of a therapeutic alliance. The idea that this residence is not a hospital, not a prison but a mere “group home” should be insulting to those who live in or run true group homes. Instead of replacing 7 locked residential beds with 16 locked hospital beds, the state could create 12 peer respite beds and 6 community centers for a fraction of the cost.

And that is why I hope you will vote against the establishment of yet another locked mental health forcible treatment facility. Middlesex Replacement Facility will just be another state hospital. And one we do not need.

Sincerely

Phoebe Wagner
Brattleboro, VT