

Theresa Utton-Jerman

Subject: No Middlesex Facility!

I am writing in opposition to the Governor's budget due to the inclusion of \$11.6 million allocated for the construction of a "secure residential" to replace Middlesex Therapeutic Community Residence.

In short:

- Having a Therapeutic Community Residence (TCR) that is locked and uses restraint, seclusion and forced drugging is an unprecedented expansion of coercive practices as no other TCRs, including the current Middlesex facility, uses restraint, seclusion or forced drugging.
- The proposed facility is functionally a hospital in its design, practices, staffing, and cost. Calling this facility a residential program is a misnomer and inappropriate. The proposed facility should be thought of as a second state hospital rather than as a residential program.
- Data from the existing state hospital (VPCH) shows that 15% of the people incarcerated there are "non-white" (people of color). This is consistent with research showing that people of color are over-represented in psychiatric incarceration while being underserved in the community. This is a racial justice issue as well as a disability justice issue.
- DMH, DAs, advocates, and people receiving services all agree that there is a desperate and chronic need for increased funding for community resources and hospital alternatives. The significant amount of money that would be required to build and operate this unnecessary facility would be better spent on meeting people's basic needs and expanding voluntary services.

Psychiatrically disabled people have the right to be supported in the community, and this also happens to be more affordable and more effective than incarceration. If we build all these hospital beds before expanding services in the community there is no chance for reducing incarceration because those beds will demand to be filled. If they aren't filled then the state will have spent millions upon millions on something that is both unnecessary and harmful.

Yana Tallon-Hicks, LMFT
Individual & Relationships Therapist
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