

Rock and Roll Express (People Meeting People) Self Advocacy Group

RRExpressSelfAdvocates@gmail.com

Dear Commissioner Murray,

Thank you for the opportunity for us to tell you our ideas about the future of Southbury Training School. We are a group of Self Advocates from the Willimantic area. We do not get our supports from any single agency. Some of us live on our own, with a variety of supports. Some of us live with our families or in group homes. Some of us lived at Mansfield Training School and one at Southbury Training School so we think we know what we are talking about. Rock and Roll Express Self Advocates' members met as a group several times to discuss our recommendations. We think we came up with some good ideas.

1. **Recommendation**: STS should absolutely be closed. The current residents should move to their communities.

Justification: STS is too expensive. Closing it would let more people have funding to get what they need. Living in an institution is not a good life. Those of us who have moved from institutions are thankful for the freedom to do what we want, have privacy, and live on our own. One of us moved from MTS 29 years ago, years she describes as, "29 good years."

2. **Recommendation**: Sell STS and use the money to give more people funding.

Justification: It's hard to find money for the things people need. This could help a lot of people.

3. **Recommendation**: Turn STS into a Community College or sell it to one of the Universities and allow people with Intellectual Disabilities go to school there for free.

Justification: People with disabilities need more access to education.

4. **Recommendation**: Use STS for affordable homes or apartments. Make part of it a park.

Justification: People need affordable places to live. This would keep the buildings from falling down like the ones at MTS. It would also give people jobs fixing them up.

5. **Recommendation**: Turn STS into a working farm and agricultural center like they did at Pineland Center in Maine. See:

<http://www.pinelandfarms.org/pineland-farms-history.html>.

Justification: Give people jobs, training, good local food, agricultural products and recreation.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comments. We hope you use some of our ideas.

Sincerely,

Rock and Roll Express Self Advocates

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