

*From the Baltimore Sun*

## **Time has come to close Rosewood Center**

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The Maryland Coalition for the Civil Rights of Persons with Disabilities is greatly concerned that Maryland is making no progress toward developing opportunities for people with disabilities to live in integrated settings ("Rosewood's revocation," editorial, Feb. 2).

The Office of Health Care Quality's recent findings of immediate jeopardy for Rosewood Center residents came as no surprise to us; many former residents and their advocates have been complaining of the deplorable conditions at that facility for years.

No one should have to live in an institution such as Rosewood.

Research demonstrates that outcomes are better for people with disabilities who live in integrated community settings. And community care costs a fraction of what institutional care costs.

But beyond the significant cost implications, people with disabilities have the legal right to live in integrated settings.

In its 1999 Olmstead decision, the U.S. Supreme Court said that institutionalization of people with disabilities perpetuates the unwarranted assumptions that such individuals are incapable or unworthy of community life.

Yet Marylanders with disabilities are still waiting for the state to fulfill the promise of Olmstead by developing a plan to move people out of outmoded institutions into community-based care.

Large congregate settings such as the Rosewood Center are relics of the past. People with disabilities demand the right to be included in the mainstream of society.

The notion that some residents of Rosewood are "too disabled" to live outside an institution is a myth.

Not all of Rosewood's residents have severe disabilities, and for each resident who does have significant impairments, there are many more individuals with similar impairments living successfully in the community.

The state will not be in a position to offer people with disabilities and their families real choices as long as facilities such as Rosewood continue to drain its long-term care system of valuable resources.

The state should close it, stop throwing good money after bad, immediately begin developing individual transition plans for its residents and use the significant savings to improve the community care infrastructure.

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The latest notice of jeopardy issued by the state for residents of the Rosewood Center highlights the immediate need to close this facility ("Rosewood warned of funding cutoff," Feb. 1).

This situation is not new.

In 2004, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reported to the General Assembly that if an institution for the disabled were to be closed, it should be the Rosewood Center.

DHMH had found that closing this center could yield substantial cost savings that could be applied to moving people to less-restrictive settings and serving some of the 16,000 people on the state's waiting list for community services.

In 2004, the Department of Legislative Services projected general fund savings of about \$11.8 million over five years from moving people out of Rosewood Center and into the community.

Funding the closure of the center was a barrier cited by the department in 2004. This is no longer a problem.

Maryland was awarded a federal "Money Follows the Person" grant that gives more money to the state as people are moved from institutions to appropriate community services.

In addition, legislation introduced by Del. James W. Hubbard would allow the state to borrow from the Community Services Trust Fund to finance the first two years of the closure process until the state realizes the savings it will accrue by transitioning institutionalized people into quality community services.

No one is talking about moving the few dangerous criminals at Rosewood Center into community neighborhoods.

What we want is appropriate treatment settings for everyone and the opportunity for people with severe and profound disabilities to live safe and connected lives in the community.

Maryland has the money to close Rosewood Center in a conscious, deliberate manner.

Does the state have the political will?

*Ed Worff  
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*The writer is the president of the Arc of Maryland.*

I am an individual with a developmental disability who once received services at a state institution. I see no credible argument for keeping the Rosewood Center open, given the opportunities available for individuals with developmental disabilities in the community ("Disabled center's closure debated," Feb. 2).

While a small portion of the residents at Rosewood do need a secure setting, alternative and secure placements could be developed once their status is reviewed.

Community-supported services are well established in Maryland and operate in environments that are more humane and fiscally responsible than Rosewood.

The federal government recognizes the institutional model as archaic; many other states also see it as a flawed model and have closed their institutions.

I appeal to the governor to not use additional taxpayer dollars to attempt to fix a system that has, for more than 20 years, been documented to be broken.

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