

Illinois Youth Center at
Murphysboro

Public Comments
as of 11/14/2011

October 28th, 2011

Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
ATTENTION: Facility Closure
706 Stratton Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Name: Carbondale Chamber of Commerce
Address: Post Office Box 131, Carbondale, IL 62903
Email: info@carbondaechamber.com
Facility Being Closed: Illinois Youth Camp Murphysboro
Position: Opponent to Facility Closing
Testimony: Written Statement Filed

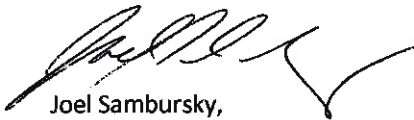
The Carbondale Chamber of Commerce purpose is to upgrade the economic and socio-economic level of the Carbondale area and the people living within its environs; to advance the business interest and to encourage the improvement of business methods; to abate trade abuses and illegitimate practices; to promote the civic interests and the general welfare of the area; to extend and promote trade and commerce; to foster the development of transportation facilities; to promote beneficial legislation and to cultivate a social feeling among its members. The mission of the Carbondale Chamber of Commerce is to advance the interests of business and make Carbondale a great place to live, work, visit, play, and invest.

The Carbondale Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors opposes the closing of the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro. The Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro has a significant economic impact in Murphysboro, Jackson County and the southern Illinois region employing close to 100 persons with the impact valued at over \$23 million. The job loses created by the facility closing in an area with high unemployment and high poverty rates will worsen the region's already poor economy.

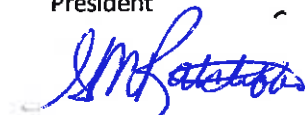
The Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro, opened in 1997, is the state's only juvenile boot camp and has as its mission to prepare youth for positive successful lives by developing self-discipline, teamwork, self-esteem and self-worth as individuals. There are various models for rehabilitating troubled youth, including community based programs. One size does not fit all and in many cases incarceration in Murphysboro's Illinois Youth Center is the best option for successful rehabilitation.

The Carbondale Chamber of Commerce recognizes the financial problems of the State of Illinois. However, closing a 14 year old modern facility that provides valuable jobs and meaningful alternative programs for courts to consider when sentencing youth is not acting in the public's best interest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel Sambursky".

Joel Sambursky,
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sherry Ratcliffe".

Sherry Ratcliffe
Executive Director



September 26, 2011

Executive Director

Henry Bayer

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Yolanda Sims

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Senator Jeff Schoenberg
Representative Patti Bellock
Co-Chairs
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield IL 62706

Dear Sen. Schoenberg and Rep. Bellock:

I am writing to express our union's objections to the accelerated schedule and problematic timing that COGFA appears to be pursuing in setting up the legally mandated public hearings regarding Governor Quinn's plans to close seven state facilities.

In the view of many concerned individuals, these closures will have a devastating impact on the economy of local communities, as well as on public safety and vital public services. The law requires only that public hearings be held within 35 days of the original filing. It is instructive that the Quinn Administration filed its closure plans with COGFA within days of announcing the closures—a clear indication that the Administration is intent on implementing these closures as quickly as possible with as little public scrutiny as possible.

Unfortunately, it appears that COGFA is prepared to collaborate in this effort to stifle public review and input rather than seeking to provide an independent review based on the broadest possible public examination of the facts--as is the clear intent of the law.

As you are aware, the COGFA public hearing on the Singer Mental Health Center closure has already been scheduled for Oct. 5, which is next week. Notice was publicly posted just last Friday. That gives mental health advocates, local elected officials and concerned citizens barely 10 days' notice.

Based on reports from elected officials in other areas impacted by closures, it appears that COGFA intends to schedule the public hearings on the other closures with similarly short—perhaps even shorter--notice. Such short timeframes make it very difficult for concerned parties—especially ordinary citizens--to have the opportunity to participate.

We have also been informed that COGFA staff is trying to combine hearings, to the detriment of public participation. Elected officials contacted to help identify locations report that COGFA intends to hold hearings back-to-back on the same day, which will

02/11



necessitate that one of the hearings be held on a weekday afternoon. We have also heard staff is considering combining hearings, which would mean a facility closure hearing may not even be held in or near the town where the facility is located.

We realize that it may not be COGFA's intent to depress turnout or stifle participation at these public hearings, but that will certainly be the result if the hearings go forward as currently planned.

In order to ensure that COGFA members are fully apprised of public concerns in developing the Commission's recommendations on these closures, we are requesting that you direct the COGFA staff to revise the schedule that is being developed so that the following criteria can be met:

- Ensure that all hearings are held in the evening or on Saturday;
- Ensure that each hearing is held in the same locality as the facility threatened with closure;
- Ensure that citizens have at least two week's notice in advance of the hearing.

I would also like to add that our union joins mental health advocates in asking you to reverse the decision by COGFA staff to allow the Tinley Park Mental Health Center closure to proceed without any independent review. COGFA Executive Director Dan Long stated in a letter to DHS Secretary Saddler that COGFA would not be reviewing the Governor's plan to close TPMHC because the Commission had conducted such a review three years ago and recommended closure. However, his decision is based on two significant inaccuracies.

First, the Commission did not previously approve closure, but a plan to replace Tinley Park MHC with another hospital. With regard to the current closure plan, Governor Quinn has not made the slightest representation that there will be a replacement facility built—nor did DHS do so in its current filing with the Commission. Furthermore Director Long states that the hospital has been downsized from 300 to 75 beds since 2008, implying a phase-out of operations is somehow going as planned. In fact, the hospital had the same number of beds in 2008, and the hospital has seen a 26% **increase** in annual admissions since then. We would also note that at the time of the previous review, there was not a plan in place—as there is now—to simultaneously close down two other state psychiatric hospitals.

I urge you to act immediately to direct the COGFA staff to ensure that COGFA hearings and reviews are conducted in such a manner as to be consistent with both the letter and spirit of the Facility Closure Act, which is intended to ensure legislative review, public input, and full scrutiny before decisions are made that have the potential to cause great harm to thousands of individuals.

Sincerely,



Henry Bayer
Executive Director

cc: COGFA Members
Dan Long



Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission

815-823 East Monroe Street • Springfield, Illinois 62701

Telephone: 217-557-2109 • Facsimile: 217-524-5586

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Ben Roe
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Randell Strickland
Chicago

Rick Velasquez
Oak Park

Dana Weiner
Chicago

October 7, 2011

The Honorable Jeffrey Schoenberg, Co-Chair
The Honorable Patricia Bellock, Co-Chair
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
ATTN: Facility Closure
Stratton Office Building, Room 703
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Sen. Schoenberg and Rep. Bellock:

I write on behalf of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission to indicate the Commission's position on the proposed closure of the IYC Murphysboro youth prison. Under Illinois law, it is the duty of the Commission to advise the General Assembly on matters relating to effective intervention in juvenile delinquency. In this capacity, the Commission has closely tracked the progress and challenges of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice in fulfilling its mandate to appropriately care for and safely return youth to their communities.

Under the skilled leadership of Director Arthur Bishop, the Department has begun to make significant improvements in the short amount of time since his appointment. While much more work remains to be done to fully equip the Department to meet the needs of youth in the state's care, Director Bishop has placed the agency on the right course and deserves additional support to fulfill DJJ's critical role.

In addition to diverting more youth from being incarcerated in our youth prisons, DJJ is doing a better job assessing each youth and preparing them for success when they return to their home communities. Illinois also should expand the new aftercare system being piloted in Cook County and make certain all youth leaving our prisons are monitored and helped by trained aftercare specialists in their home communities. Improving the experience inside juvenile prisons and helping maintain changed behaviors when the youth return home should lower recidivism, which will make our communities safer and further reduce the need for expensive prison beds.

However, while no member takes lightly the potential local economic hardship caused by facility closure, the Commission notes the growing body of research which clearly demonstrates that intelligently-designed community based services and supervision are extraordinarily more effective and cost efficient in enhancing youth outcomes and community safety than are incarceration-based models. The Redeploy Illinois program provides an excellent model, diverting more than 1,600 youth from unnecessary incarceration since 2005. According to the state's Auditor General, incarceration cost taxpayers \$86,861 per youth in Fiscal Year 2010, with costs rising to over \$90,000 per youth in Fiscal Year 2011. In contrast, the Redeploy program provides more effective community-based services at a fraction of that cost, with no discernable negative impact on public safety.

In our deliberations, many Commissioners noted that closure of the Murphysboro facility should be only the first step in a more comprehensive consolidation of DJJ prisons. The state's eight juvenile prisons have a combined capacity of 1,754 beds, with a current population of fewer than 1,120 youth. This imbalance has occurred because the state has kept all eight youth prisons in operation while the state's average daily population of DJJ prisons dropped from 1,603 in FY 05 to 1,113 in FY 11. In fact, if all youth are transferred from Murphysboro to other DJJ prisons, the state will still have nearly 600 more beds than needed. For these reasons, the Commission has resolved as follows:

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission believes that closure of one or more IDJJ facilities is appropriate and necessary, given the high costs and limited efficacy of incarceration-based strategies and the declining youth population in IDJJ facilities. The Commission further urges that any cost savings of facilities closure be reinvested in community-based strategies which prevent costly and unnecessary incarceration of youth or which assist young people in returning safely and successfully to their communities.

On behalf of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, I urge consideration of these points in allocating the state's scarce fiscal resources.

Sincerely,



Hon. George W. Timberlake, Retired
Chairman, Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission

JUVENILE JUSTICE INITIATIVE

**518 DAVIS, SUITE 211
EVANSTON, IL 60201
847.864.1567**

WWW.JJUSTICE.ORG

October 7, 2011

Senator Jeffrey M. Schoenberg
Representative Patricia R. Bellock
Co-Chairs
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Murphysboro IYC Facility Closure Hearing October 12, 2011

Dear COGFA Co-Chairs and Members:

The Juvenile Justice Initiative supports the proposal of the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice to close the IYC-Murphysboro.

Attached is a position paper summarizing the policy rationale behind our recommendation that Illinois close one or more of its eight juvenile prisons. While the current Director and staff have worked diligently to improve conditions within the juvenile facilities, it is simply not sustainable to administer operations at eight separate facilities for the rapidly diminishing juvenile population of less than 1,200 youth.

We also note, this is part of a national trend to shift state financial investment from costly and ineffective institutional care to individualized community based care. As a recent national report notes, **18 states have closed over 50 juvenile prisons since 2007**. States including Texas, California, Ohio and New York have shifted some of the savings to community based care. As other states have concluded, good public policy and smart budgeting argue for closure of one or more of the eight juvenile prisons in Illinois with a shift of savings to community programming.

For too long we have invested scarce state resources in institutional confinement, spending over \$100 million annually to confine youth, but less than \$3 million at the front end to keep youth out through Redeploy Illinois – and providing virtually no state resources to keep youth from returning through juvenile aftercare services. Despite the miniscule state investment to keep youth out of confinement, we have seen dramatic reductions in the number of youth committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice. Shifting some of the savings from closing one – or more – youth facilities to community-based alternatives would continue this positive trend of reduced juvenile offending, thereby improving public safety and providing more resources for youth across the state.

Attached is the recent report from the Annie E Casey Foundation, *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*, (Oct., 2011), www.aecf.org . As the report concludes, there is now “overwhelming evidence that the wholesale incarceration of juvenile offenders is a failed strategy” for reducing juvenile crime.

We have also attached a report from the federal Dept. of Justice, reviewing a longitudinal study (Pathways to Desistance, funded by the MacArthur Foundation) on juvenile offenders that includes findings documenting the inefficacy of longer juvenile incarcerations on decreasing repeat offending. <http://www.ojjdp.gov/publications/PubAbstract.asp?pubi=253020>

Thank you for your attention to this proposed facility closure. We will be happy to answer any questions or provide further information.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Clarke
President
Juvenile Justice Initiative

THE CASE FOR CLOSING ONE OR MORE OF THE EIGHT JUVENILE PRISONS IN ILLINOIS

On Sept. 8, Gov. Pat Quinn announced plans to deal with a budget shortfall by closing three mental health centers, two developmental centers, one adult prison and one juvenile prison.

As recent reports document, good public policy and smart budgeting argue for closure of one or more of the eight juvenile prisons in Illinois.

In stark contrast to serious overcrowding conditions of the 27 prisons in the adult correctional system, commitments to the eight juvenile prisons have declined significantly in recent years, and the juvenile system is far below its capacity. As a result, per-bed costs have skyrocketed at the same time the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has struggled to provide adequate schooling and counseling needed to rehabilitate juveniles in the eight prisons.

Even if state government were not facing a budget crisis, Gov. Quinn and lawmakers should be planning to downsize the juvenile prisons and should invest some of the savings in community services that local courts could use to respond to juvenile offenders, who would benefit from drug and alcohol treatment, mentoring, counseling and other services.

A new report from the Annie E Casey Foundation, *No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*, (Oct., 2011), www.aecf.org, concludes there is now “overwhelming evidence that the wholesale incarceration of juvenile offenders is a failed strategy” for reducing juvenile crime. The report documents that **18 states have closed over 50 juvenile prisons since 2007.**

Illinois has dramatically reduced the number of youth in state youth facilities, with a corresponding reduction in juvenile crime. Yet, as the juvenile prison population decreases, the costs rise. It is time to begin downsizing our state’s institutional investment and shift savings to community based alternatives.

**ILLINOIS CAN DO MORE TO REFORM JUVENILE JUSTICE AND MAKE OUR
COMMUNITIES SAFER**

THE DATA . . .

STEADY DECLINE IN NUMBER OF JUVENILES SENT TO STATE PRISONS

In recent years, there has been a steady decline in the number of youth committed to DJJ prisons. Between FY 05 and FY 11, there has been a 30 percent drop in average daily population from 1,603 to 1,113.

FISCAL YEAR	AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION
FY 05	1,603
FY 06	1459
FY 07	1,428
FY 08	1,364
FY 09	1,329
FY 10	1,192
FY 11	1,113

(Sources: DJJ audit, state budget documents and the Criminal Justice Information Authority)

UNLIKE ADULT PRISONS, JUVENILE PRISONS ARE FAR BELOW CAPACITY

The eight juvenile prisons have a combined capacity of 1,754. Operating prisons at 68 percent of capacity is not cost effective. By reducing the number of juvenile prisons, the state can save money on management salaries, facility maintenance, utilities and more. System costs can be reduced without overcrowding the remaining juvenile prisons.

JUVENILE PRISON	CAPACITY	FY 10 AVERAGE POPULATION
Chicago	130	71
Harrisburg	276	276
Joliet	344	227
Murphysboro	156	62
Kewanee	354	211
Pere Marquette	68	18
St. Charles	318	269
Warrenville	108	58

(Source: Auditor General supplemental digest released August 2011. FY 10 average population numbers provided to Auditor General by DJJ)

SKYROCKETING PER-BED COSTS

The reduction in the number of incarcerated juveniles without closing any of the eight prisons across Illinois has caused per-bed operation costs to skyrocket.

FISCAL YEAR	PER-BED COST
FY 07	\$70,915
FY 08	\$78,846
FY 09	\$87,009
FY 10	\$86,861
FY 11	\$92,257 (estimated cost)

(Sources: DJJ audit, state budget documents and DJJ estimate for FY 11)

CHANGING RESPONSE TO JUVENILE CRIME IN ILLINOIS

More than 100 years ago, the nation's first juvenile court was established in Cook County – a recognition that juveniles are different from adults because of their limited capacity to understand and make “adult” decisions. Over the years, the response to juvenile crime changed and the juvenile system became more “adultified” with more emphasis on punishment and less on rehabilitation. ***The results included higher numbers of youth in prisons providing few services and a return to juvenile prison of more than 50 percent.***

More recently, we have learned from research into the development of the brain that the brain systems providing for impulse control are still maturing during adolescence, and evidence-based practices point to more successful rehabilitation for youth outside prison walls. In response, the juvenile justice system in Illinois has increased efforts to implement evidence-based practices that stop reoffending by treating youth in the community. Illinois' fiscal reinvestment model of Redeploy Illinois, shifting state resources to community based alternatives to juvenile prisons, has demonstrated success at diverting over 200 youth annually and is a nationally acclaimed model.

Illinois also has encouraged counties to take more responsibility for rehabilitating their juveniles in their home communities. The Redeploy Illinois program, which began in 2005 as a pilot at four sites, offers financial support to counties willing to reduce the number of juveniles committed to state prisons by 25 percent. The successful reduction of commitments to state youth prisons convinced state leaders to increase Redeploy Illinois opportunities statewide. If the state had closed beds as a result of diverting 184 youth from prison in 2010, for example, there would have been a \$9 million savings to the state, according to a cost benefit analysis by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

For more information about trends in juvenile justice reform, visit the website of Models for Change, an initiative of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation: www.modelsforchange.net

“The Costs of Confinement: Why Good Juvenile Justice Policies Make Good Fiscal Sense,” a report by the Justice Policy Institute:
<http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/78>

See cost benefit analysis of Redeploy Illinois here:
<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=55824&newssidebar=27893>

See annual Redeploy Illinois report here: [http://www.jjustice.org/pdf/Redeploy Report Jan 2010.pdf](http://www.jjustice.org/pdf/Redeploy_Report_Jan_2010.pdf)

Charts from Illinois Auditor General William G. Holland’s supplemental digest of Department of Juvenile Justice, August 2011:
<http://www.auditor.illinois.gov/Audit-Reports/Compliance-Agency-List/Corrections/DOJJ/FY10-DOJJ-Supplemental-Digest.pdf>

The Juvenile Justice Project of the John Howard Association of Illinois:
<http://thejha.org/jjp>

The website of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice:
<http://www.idjj.state.il.us/>

The website of the Juvenile Justice Initiative: <http://www.jjustice.org/>

**For additional information or comment, contact:
Elizabeth Clarke,
President, Juvenile Justice Initiative
847-864-1567
847-894-4206 (cell)**

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

The mission of the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council is to organize the community to promote social justice for all working people.

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October 14, 2011

Patricia Bellock, Co-Chairwoman
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Jeffrey Schoenberg, Co-Chairman
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear Co-Chairs Bellock and Schoenberg:

We are requesting that the enclosed letter be submitted into public record with regards to the COGFA hearings concerning the potential closing of the Chester Mental Health Center in Chester, IL and the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro, IL.

Sincerely,
S.I.C.L.C.
Jason Woolard
Jason Woolard, President

JW:an

106 North Monroe Street • West Frankfort, IL 62896
Phone (618) 932-2102 • Fax (618) 932-2311
A CHARTERED ORGANIZATION OF THE AFL-CIO

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

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Springfield, Illinois 62706

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Dear Co-Chairs Bellock and Schoenberg:

AFSCME Council 31 is a long time participating Union in the Southern Illinois Central Labor Council (SICLC) which also includes many other AFL-CIO affiliated unions and additional unions participating under Solidarity Charters from throughout all of Southern Illinois.

The SICLC has a history of supporting the collective bargaining process for workers in Southern Illinois and we have openly supported those workers and their legal rights which are protected under Federal and State laws.

It is the understanding of the SICLC that the State of Illinois has made commitments through a means of negotiations with AFSCME Council 31 to provide contractually agreed upon terms and conditions of employment at the Chester Mental Health Center in Chester, and the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro. However, in a recent turn of events the State of Illinois has taken a position which could potentially eliminate its obligations to AFSCME Council 31 workers in Southern Illinois while working under a signed agreement with the State.

The SICLC is hopeful that AFSCME Council 31 and the State of Illinois are able to find a lawful and amicable way of resolving their differences in this matter concerning what the SICLC believes to be a legal commitment to provide employment to many workers in the Southern Illinois region.

Sincerely,
S.I.C.L.C.
Jason Woolard
Jason Woolard, President

JW:an
Cc: Michael Carrigan, Illinois AFL-CIO President
AFSCME Council 31

106 North Monroe Street • West Frankfort, IL 62896
Phone (618) 932-2102 • Fax (618) 932-2311
A CHARTERED ORGANIZATION OF THE AFL-CIO

Belknap, Donna K.

From: Thomas Walsh <tjw7460@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, October 07, 2011 10:06 AM
To: Belknap, Donna K.
Subject: Fwd: A fax has arrived from 708-784-0728, 1 page(s)
Attachments: 208180632621.PDF; ATT00001.htm

Donna,

Thank you for your help. This is for next Wednesday's hearing in Murphysboro.

Tom Walsh
708-205-4900

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: MetroFax <faxbounce@fax.metrohispeed.com>
Date: October 7, 2011 9:12:20 AM CDT
To: tjw7460@yahoo.com
Subject: A fax has arrived from 708-784-0728, 1 page(s)
Reply-To: faxbounce@fax.metrohispeed.com



From: 708-784-0728
To: 708-310-3462
Date/Time: 10-7-2011 9:12:19 AM (GMT-05:00)
Page(s): 1
Transmission Time: 00:51

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E-MAIL TJW7460@Yahoo.com

MAIN ADDRESS:

4117 HARVEY AVENUE
WESTERN SPRINGS, ILLINOIS 60558

CHICAGO ADDRESS:

134 N. LA SALLE, SUITE 600
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

Senator Jeffrey M. Schoenberg
Representative Patricia R Bellock
Co-Chairs
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Murphysboro IYC Facility Closure Hearing October 12, 2011

Dear COGFA Co-Chairs and Members:

As a registered lobbyist for the Juvenile Justice Initiative, this is to express support for the closure of the IYC at Murphysboro.

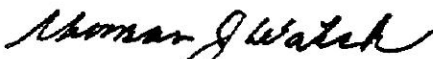
Given the significant decline in youth population in the Dept. of Juvenile Justice, and the resulting increased costs per bed, closure of at least one, and possibly more, juvenile facilities is good public policy. Over the past six years, the average daily population in the Dept. of Juvenile Justice has decreased 30% from 1,603 in FY05 to 1,113 in FY11. As the population has decreased, the cost per-bed has increased, from \$70,915 in FY07 to an estimated cost of \$92,257 today.

Maintaining eight separate juvenile facilities for less than 1,200 youth is unsustainable.

Escalating costs, poor outcomes and recurring concerns about inappropriate conditions of confinement have led to the closure of over 50 juvenile prisons across 18 states since 2007. States, including Texas and Ohio, are shifting savings to more effective and less costly community based alternatives, similar to the Redeploy Illinois program in this state. It is time for Illinois to similarly downsize its juvenile prison investment and shift savings to community alternatives.

Please let me know if you have any questions or comments.

Sincerely,



Thomas Walsh

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

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Jason Woolard
Jason Woolard, President

JW:an
Cc: Michael Carrigan, Illinois AFL-CIO President
AFSCME Council 31

106 North Monroe Street • West Frankfort, IL 62896
Phone (618) 932-2102 • Fax (618) 932-2311
A CHARTERED ORGANIZATION OF THE AFL-CIO

The Honorable Jeffrey Schoenberg and The Honorable Patricia Bellock
Co-chairs
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

October 11, 2011

Dear Sen. Schoenberg and Rep. Bellock,

I fully support Governor Quinn's decision to close IYC- Murphysboro. In a recent column, Betsy Clarke offered the following assessment of the Illinois Youth Prisons:

"Illinois currently runs eight separate far-flung juvenile facilities to house an average of less than 1,200 youth. These eight facilities are costly. The average annual cost per bed has rapidly risen from \$70,915 five years ago to an estimate of more than \$90,000 this year. The per bed cost at the Murphysboro youth prison, which the governor plans to close, is far above average and climbed to \$142,342 per bed in FY10. Operation of each facility entails significant administrative costs as does collective oversight and management of the eight separate facilities.

If each of the eight facilities ran quality programming with successful results, there might be justification for continuing their operation. The facts, however, are dismally opposite. Reports document a juvenile prison system that is ineffective, with over half the youth returning to juvenile prisons within three years. Most facilities struggle to maintain minimal educational programming, let alone adequate mental health treatment, recreation or vocational classes."

We believe that it is right to close IYC-Murphysboro on both humanitarian and fiscal grounds.

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Augusta Scescke

6435 N. Talman Ave.

Chicago, IL

60645



John Howard Association of Illinois

375 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 529 Chicago, IL 60611
Tel. 312-503-6300 Fax. 312-503-6306 www.thejha.org

Monitoring Visit to IYC-Chicago December 17, 2010

On December 17, 2010 the John Howard Association conducted a visit at IYC-Chicago. Below are our observations.

Physical Plant

IYC-Chicago was designed as a maximum security juvenile facility to house the anticipated explosion of juvenile “super-predators” predicted to emerge in the early nineties. The predictions proved inaccurate, however, and responding to actual needs, IYC-Chicago serves as a minimum security facility with a particular focus on youth who are within six months of their release dates.

The contradiction between the maximum security design of the facility and the youth incarcerated there is stark. The only outside recreational area is a concrete basketball court in an area that doubles as a sallie port with a loading dock—this area is closed during the winter. Moreover, youths’ rooms closely resemble prison cells. Although slightly bigger than the average adult prison cell, the rooms are barren and heavy metal doors lock from the outside. Adding to the sterility of the rooms, all property must fit in and be kept in a property box. IDJJ is currently looking to end the use of property boxes, but lacks the necessary funding to implement the change.

Some walls in the facility are covered with murals painted by past residents. Though new murals are not prohibited, there is no one with the responsibility of coordinating new murals. An Art Therapist position could solve this problem, but funds for new positions are scarce. There are also some program themed posters and other inspirational signs, but for the most part the walls remain blank and are painted in neutral tones.

As JHA has noted in the past, the facility lacks any foliage. Indoor plants could add a great deal of warmth to the facility, and are particularly important since many of the youth are unable to go outdoors for months at a time. During our visit the facility was decorated for Christmas with donated artificial trees and other decorations administration could acquire on their limited budget. Although the decorations were not impressive in scope or quality, they went a long way to soften the facility. Seasonal decorations throughout the year would be a great way to add warmth.

Observations: The facility still has the feel of a maximum security institution. Though administration is limited by the building itself, small additions could go a long way.

Recommendations: Implement a system to allow current residents to replace old murals or add new murals to the blank spaces on the walls. Bring in plants that could be maintained by the youth.

School

The school at IYC Chicago is very small and consists of five classrooms. Four of the classrooms are accessed through the library and the fifth is located just outside of the main school area. The library is a small triangular room: two walls are shelved with books; the third wall has windows that look into the hallway and is occupied by relatively new computers, which lack internet access.

Students attend school 6 hours on each weekday except Thursdays when they only attend in the morning, totaling 26.5 hours per week. The acting principal is in the process of implementing a Positive Behavior Interventions Support (PBIS) program in the school. IYC-St. Charles has implemented PBIS in its school, providing a model for IYC-Chicago. PBIS involves modeling and teaching expectations of good behavior, proactive behavioral modification, and rewarding good behavior rather than punishing bad behavior. The facility will create a list of behavioral expectations for the students, which will also apply to staff. In some cases of misconduct students are referred to the Ready to Learn program (RTL), any referral to RTL requires a form to be filled out by the teacher detailing the behavior involved and management tools the teacher used to correct the issue. The RTL referrals serve as the alternative to disciplinary write ups while the students are in school.

Although it takes time to train staff and teachers in PBIS, the advantage of PBIS is its focus on data-driven reform, meaning data is collected to determine the effectiveness of the program and the staff in the school. PBIS is also intended to minimize the amount of time students spend out of the classroom for behavioral issues. The administration will continue evaluation of the program and consider other behavioral models if needed.

During the visit, JHA observed one juvenile justice specialist speak to a youth sitting in the library after being sent out of class. After determining why the youth had been sent out of class, the specialist immediately took the youth back to the room and requested that the teacher allow him to return. This is a promising development and if teachers are trained in the same manner as this juvenile justice specialist, youth will spend less time out of class.

Due to the physical set up and a lack of resources, IYC-Chicago does not offer any vocational training or post-high school or post-GED educational opportunities. IDJJ is exploring partnering with universities and other schools to solve this issue, but as of yet nothing has come to fruition.

There are five teachers employed at IYC-Chicago, one of whom is certified in special education. The school has four staffing vacancies, principal, office coordinator, science teacher, and gym teacher. The principal's position was vacated on November 30, 2010. Another teacher would make it possible to

shrink classes and allow students to be trained on and use the computers in the library. Currently, students seldom have access to the computers. A seventh teacher would be ideal so the school could have a P.E. teacher; this would allow for more one on one interaction between teachers and students.

As previous JHA reports have indicated, the hiring process for teachers presents a serious obstacle. Applicants often accept other job offers before the various levels of required approval are satisfied and the search must start over from the beginning.

Observations: The computers are under-utilized. Teachers and staff seem to have different methods of discipline. There are no educational opportunities past a high school diploma or GED. Two more teachers would accomplish much.

Recommendations: Implement the PBIS training for all staff and teachers as soon as possible. Request that the facility be allowed to connect student computers to the internet, with appropriate filtering software. Hire a teacher for computer class and seek to open a second teacher's position for a P.E. teacher.

Staff

IYC-Chicago recently hired a new superintendent, Angela Wartowski. Ms. Wartowski is a former teacher and state's attorney in Winnebago County Juvenile court. She is also currently pursuing her masters in education to be certified as a principal. It was clear from our visit that Ms. Wartowski makes interaction with the youth a priority. Many of the youth seemed excited to see her and to tell her about their accomplishments. At one point a group of youth from the halfway back program was preparing to put on a skit with a group of TASC workers. Though the youth did not want to do the skit in front of our group, they specifically requested that Ms. Wartowski stay to watch.

The other staff at the facility seemed to genuinely care about the youth put in their care. Staff members volunteer their time to work with youth in sports tournaments, recreational activities, and community field trips. During the holidays, special programming and events are coordinated by staff, many of whom use their own money to buy gifts for the residents.

When JHA asked whether staff received training in how to deal with and recognize traumatized youth, staff mentioned informal collaboration when youth exhibit problem behavior. In February 2010, all staff were given training in trauma. Additional training is given to staff on a cycle. Superintendent Wartowski stated that "cross training" would be a priority in the coming months, so that staff with experience and knowledge in certain areas could train other staff members.

There are several vacant positions at the facility including: Asst. Superintendent of Operations, Asst. Superintendent of Programs, Corrections Food Service Supervisor, Juvenile Justice Youth & Family Specialist and Supervisor, Business Manager, and Executive Secretary. Some of these positions will be filled soon, others have been vacant for quite some time.

Observations: Generally staff seem caring and interact well with the youth. Formal training between staff is needed.

Recommendations: IDJJ should fill the vacancies. The formal “cross training” should be implemented as soon as practicable.

Mental Health

Mental health services are provided by two part-time psychologists (20 hours per week each) and one part-time psychiatrist (5 hours per week and as needed). IDJJ classifies youth by mental health levels ranging from no level to urgent; at the time of our visit IYC-Chicago held 20 youth with no mental health level and 56 youth at the “minimum” mental health need level.

The mental health staff runs three separate mental health groups while DHS volunteers run a fourth specifically geared toward youth with trauma. In total, 34 youth participate. Youth are assigned to these groups by mental health staff based on file reviews and screening instruments. The staff run groups focused on social skills, emotional identification and regulation, and anger management. Another group, Aggression Replacement Training (ART), is a pilot program run by educators, security staff, and substance abuse counselors. ART will be reviewed once success data is available and possibly implemented at other facilities.

JHA volunteers and staff were surprised to learn at the time of our visit the facility had no youth on psychotropic medications. Although the facility houses only the lowest mental health level youth, studies indicate that the likelihood of no youth needing medication in any given facility is relatively small. For instance, one study of youth in juvenile detention in Chicago found that two thirds of males had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder. The facility uses standardized screening instruments for mental health. One mental health staff member admitted that “very many” of the residents met the diagnostic criteria for depression, anxiety, attention-deficit, and other mental health disorders based on these instruments. JHA was told by several staff that youth are “rarely” prescribed medication.

In an interview with the psychiatrist JHA learned that typically youth in need of medication are assigned to other facilities. The facility psychiatrist described himself as “conservative” when it comes to medicating youth, but when a youth sent to IYC-Chicago is on medication, protocol is to continue the meds. We were also told that at times parents will refuse to give the facility consent to prescribe medications for depression and other disorders. Any treatment plan calling for medications or for a youth to be removed from medications, involves consultation reports with the school, therapists, and the security staff to assess the effectiveness of the treatment.

Observations: The facility houses youth in the lowest categories of mental health needs and few if any are on psychotropic medications.

Recommendations: Continue to quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate mental health programs and adjust them accordingly. Remain open to prescribing medications where appropriate.

Discipline

IYC-Chicago has made a genuine effort to end the use of confinement except in extreme circumstances. The data supports that the facility has been successful in its efforts. No youth was confined in November or October. In all of 2010, confinement was used a total of 42 times for a total of 79 days, an average of 1.88 days per confinement. Administration stated that when confinement is used immediate action is taken to begin working towards the youth's release from confinement.

The most often used disciplinary practice, other than meeting with youth and discussing their behavior and ways to correct it, is the "blue jumpsuit." The blue jumpsuit must be ordered by a disciplinary hearing officer. When wearing the jumpsuit, youth are not allowed to work or participate in group activities. The youth still attend school and other programs, but are essentially kept from full social interaction. Youth in blue jumpsuits consult with counselors and therapists each day to discuss their issue and a plan to avoid future incidents. On average youth spend five days in the blue jumpsuit.

During our visit we spoke to one youth in a jumpsuit and one who had recently been given his privileges back. Both of these youth seemed to recognize that they had acted inappropriately and, though not happy with it, seemed to think that the punishment was not too severe. This program is a much more appropriate approach to the discipline of youth than confinement and keeps youth from being severely isolated. Administration stated that other facilities have shown an interest in the blue jumpsuit approach, and JHA would support all facilities using this alternative to confinement. IDJJ is in the process of exploring restorative justice practices as well. Currently no formal restorative justice programs are operating at IYC-Chicago.

Observations: Confinement is becoming increasingly obsolete at IYC-Chicago. Instead, the facility is using more appropriate and humane practices for behavioral correction.

Recommendations: IDJJ should consider implementing the blue jumpsuit or similar programs at all facilities.

Budgetary Issues

The state suffers from budget shortages across the board; IDJJ and IYC-Chicago are no exception. The IDJJ budget has been cut another 10 percent this year and further cuts are not out of the question. Even those bills necessary for operation are not being paid on time by the state, resulting in serious problems for administration. For instance, during Thanksgiving IDJJ was forced to transport garbage from IYC-Chicago to IYC-St. Charles because the state was so behind in payment that the waste management company would not pick up the trash.

IYC-Chicago is unique to other facilities in that they lack food storage space and, therefore, must order food on a more regular basis. The state's failure to pay has led to some vendors refusing to deliver food to the facility.

The gym at the facility is in desperate need of rehab. The carpet in the gym is in total disrepair and presents a potential safety risk as youth could trip over the frays and holes. The mats used to pad the walls are falling apart and soon will be useless. The gym is particularly important at IYC-Chicago because youth have no access to outside recreational areas. The gym is the sole location for most youth to exercise.

Budget constraints also force the facility to rely heavily on volunteer programming. As former Superintendent Merritt put it “volunteers are the lifeblood of the facility.” Although JHA agrees that volunteer programming is a wonderful tool, the state must recognize that treating youth rather than warehousing them requires funding programs.

Expanding community based treatment and diversion programs for youth would save a great deal of money and reduce the number of incarcerated youth. Redeploy Illinois has proven the cost effectiveness of such programs. The savings gained could be invested in programs for the remaining incarcerated youth.

Observations: Budget issues are affecting essential operations and preventing needed repairs and improvements.

Recommendations: Decrease the number of youth sent to facilities by expanding community treatment programs and incentives. Use the savings to fund more programming for the smaller number of youth remaining in the facilities.

Volunteer Programs

The facility has a wide array of volunteer programs available to the youth. The list of programs is too lengthy for the purposes of this report, but a few are described below.

The Safe Humane program provides youth the opportunity to work with dogs. The program is meant to reduce violence against animals, but also to teach the youth compassion and empathy through dog training. The program lasts 8 weeks and gives the youth the opportunity to visit the program’s facility. Approximately 15 youth participate in the program at any given time.

Story Catchers provides an introduction to the arts through theatre. Youth in the program participate in script writing, stage craft, and all other aspects of putting on a play. The program lasts six months and culminates in the youth performing their play for parents and staff. This program also operates at IYC-Warrenville.

IYC-Chicago also has a youth baseball team that participates in a tournament outside the facility. Staff members volunteer their personal time to coach and practice with the residents. The opportunity to leave the facility is particularly important at IYC-Chicago given the lack of access to the outdoors.

One Family One Child is a holistic mentoring program focused on counseling, building life skills, and community reintegration. This program is particularly unique as it continues to support the youth upon release. The phone number for One Family One Child is given to each youth upon release. Youth are encouraged to call anytime they need assistance or guidance. Administration stated that one youth who excelled in the program is having his college education paid for by a volunteer and another received a college scholarship from the program.

Other programs include religious counseling, current events discussion, tutoring, and substance abuse counseling.

Observations: Volunteer programs provide many opportunities for the youth that would otherwise be unavailable.

Recommendations: Increase the number of youth participants in programs outside the facility. Continue to seek interactive volunteer programs.

Youth's Access to the Outdoors and the Community

As noted throughout this report, IYC-Chicago has no outdoor areas. Youth could spend 6 months in the facility and only see the world through the window in their room. Although several programs do allow youth to exit the facility, not all youth are included.

Administration has increased the number of community field trips this year, but they recognize that more are needed. Opportunities for community service field trips are also under consideration.

Given the location of IYC-Chicago and the lack of outdoor access, community interaction is particularly important. Additionally, most of the youth at the facility are very close to release, and community interaction would further help prepare them for reentry. Given the research indicating the substantial role that community involvement plays in youth rehabilitation, these trips should be given more priority in IDJJ's budget.

Observations: Administration recognizes the importance of community field trips, particularly at IYC-Chicago.

Recommendations: Continue to seek more opportunities to get the youth outside of the facility, particularly for outdoor activities.

Family Involvement and Visitation

IYC-Chicago administration recognizes that family involvement is key to a youth successfully turning his life around. Because of this, the facility allows family visitation six hours on weekends and holidays and two hours on Thursday and Friday. In addition to family members, the facility allows "mentor"

visits; mentors may be any individual from the community that plays a significant role in the youth's life. Mentors must be approved by parents prior to visiting and are screened by the facility.

Parents are invited to monthly family meetings with staff and administration to discuss youths' progress in treatment and to explain transitional needs of the youth. The facility has also implemented a family contact log to track all contacts between staff and family. Staff members are encouraged to contact and work with families on all issues.

Observations: Family involvement is being recognized as one of the most important practices in the facility.

Recommendations: Continue to explore new and effective ways to engage families in the youths' treatment.

The Grievance Process

The grievance process is explained to youth in the Orientation Handbook provided upon arrival at the facility. The youth are encouraged to first discuss their grievance with their Youth and Family Specialist. If youth are not satisfied with the outcome they can file a formal grievance on a form and drop it in grievance boxes which are located in each housing unit and the cafeteria. Each formal grievance is addressed by a grievance officer and a recommendation for resolution made to the Youth and Family Specialist. If the youth still feels the grievance has not been resolved an appeal will first be addressed by the grievance officer, if still not satisfied an appeal may be sent to the Administrative Review Board in Springfield.

JHA found that the grievance log for the facility had not been updated in several months. Obviously, this was a severe oversight that we were assured it would be remedied. Deputy Director Ron Smith recently created a Casework Supervisor position, the supervisor would be responsible for keeping the log current.

JHA has had discussions with IDJJ regarding implementation of an ombudsmen program to review grievances that youth feel have not been addressed or that youth are uncomfortable bringing to staff. Superintendent Wartowski indicated a desire for the facility to be a pilot site for this program and a desire to revamp the grievance process.

Observations: Grievance materials and boxes are readily available to youth. The grievance log was not up to date.

Recommendations: Take steps to ensure that the grievance log is kept current. Implement an ombudsmen program or similar program to provide outside oversight of the grievance process and resolutions.

This report was written by Chris Bernard, Director of the John Howard Association's Juvenile Justice Project. He may be reached at (312) 503-6303 or cbernard@thejha.org.

JHA staff members John Maki and Angie Weis, and Citizen Observers Del Arsenault, Barb Arsenault, Alexander Brown, Judy Cottle, and Mark Hassakis contributed to this report.

Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports instrumental in improving prison conditions.

The preparation of this report was supported
by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur
Foundation's Illinois Models for Change Initiative

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Public Comments on the Facility Closure of the Illinois Youth Center at Murphysboro

ADVISORY BOARD

**To the
Department of Juvenile Justice**

October 6, 2011

Senator Jeffrey M. Schoenberg
Representative Patricia R. Bellock
Co-Chairs
Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability
703 Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Murphysboro IYC Facility Closure Hearing October 12, 2011

Dear COGFA Co-Chairs and Members:

The Advisory Board to the Department of Juvenile Justice supports the proposal of the Governor and the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice to close the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro.

At the outset, we wish to clarify that this recommendation is no reflection on the hard work of the committed Department of Juvenile Justice leadership and staff. Rather, it reflects a growing national recognition that incarceration does not effectively rehabilitate youth.

The Dept. of Juvenile Justice was created in 2006 with a statutory mission to “provide treatment and services through a **comprehensive continuum of individualized educational, vocational, social, emotional, and basic life skills to enable youth to avoid delinquent futures and become productive, fulfilled citizens.**” 730 ILCS 5/3-2.5-5. The statute creating the Department of Juvenile Justice mandated the creation of an Advisory Board, statutorily required to advise the Director on policy matters and programs of the Department, and to establish, with the Director and the Office of the Governor, outcome measures to ensure the successful fulfillment of the statutory mission of the Department. 730 ILCS 5/3-2.5-65. The DJJ Advisory Board has met quarterly since its appointment to review and comment on the progress of the Dept. of Juvenile Justice. Over the past years, members of the DJJ Advisory Board and members of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission have jointly “adopted” individual DJJ youth facilities in order to acquire first hand knowledge of the reforms taking place within the eight juvenile facilities.

On October 5, 2011, the Advisory Board to the Department of Juvenile Justice met to review the recommendation of the Director to close IYC Murphysboro. The DJJ Advisory Board members were briefed by the Department's Legal Staff on the Director's recommendations concerning IYC Murphysboro.

Following the briefing, and having reviewed the relevant written materials filed with COGFA, the DJJ Advisory Board unanimously voted to support the recommendation of the Director of the Department of Juvenile Justice for the closure of IYC Murphysboro, as filed with the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability on September 16, 2011. In support, DJJ Advisory Board members noted the decrease in Department population, the increase in per bed costs, the availability of vacant beds in other Department facilities for the youth, and the availability of jobs within 50 miles for IYC-Murphysboro staff, all as indicated in the Director's September 16th report to COGFA.

There are several recommendations that the DJJ Advisory Board members request be considered when closing the facility and transferring youth, including the following:

1. The DJJ Advisory Board urges that youth housed in Murphysboro at the time of closing be moved to a youth facility as close, or closer, to home;
2. The DJJ Advisory Board urges that youth housed in Murphysboro at the time of closing be moved to facilities that meet the classification needs of the youth;
3. The DJJ Advisory Board urges that the Illinois Legislature ensure the Dept. of Juvenile Justice have adequate resources to provide services, treatment and programming for the youth in its care; and
4. The DJJ Advisory Board urges that the State of Illinois use incarceration of youth only as a last resort, per the increasing body of research and documentation that community based alternatives are as effective, or more effective, than incarceration in providing for the public's safety and in rehabilitating youth in conflict with the law.

The DJJ Advisory Board took particular note of a new publication released earlier this week from the Annie E. Casey Foundation – *"No Place for Kids: The Case for Reducing Juvenile Incarceration"* (Oct., 2011). The report notes that 18 states have closed more than 50 juvenile prisons within the past four years, and concludes there is a growing consensus among experts that the current incarceration model provides little public safety benefit. www.aecf.org The report conducts a comprehensive review of research and new data on the effectiveness and costs of juvenile incarceration and concludes there is now "overwhelming evidence that the wholesale incarceration of juvenile offenders is a failed strategy" for combating youth crime since it does not reduce future offending, does not enhance public safety, wastes taxpayer dollars and exposes youth to violence and abuse.

For these reasons, we urge support for the recommendation of the Director to close IYC-Murphysboro. We will be happy to provide further information or answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Clarke
Chair, Juvenile Advisory Board
On Behalf of the Juvenile Advisory Board to the Department of Juvenile Justice

Advisory Board Members: Walter Brandon, Elizabeth Clarke, Rogers Jackson, David Olson, Patrick Perez, Terry Solomon, Randolph Stone, Rick Velasquez, and Eva Annetta Wilson.

Cc: Arthur Bishop, Director, Department of Juvenile Justice
Toni Irving, Office of the Governor

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing as a concerned citizen and proponent of keeping the IYC center open in Murphysboro, IL.

These proposed closures in Illinois will adversely affect the lives of their employees, and add to the high levels of unemployment in Southern Illinois.

Most importantly, the clients that they serve will experience the greatest loss. Please reconsider the closure.

Sincerely,

Michael Ebersohl
Du Quoin, IL

This letter is in support of keeping the communities of Murphysboro and Chester IL viable economically by keeping the facilities for mental health open in both communities. Those served by these facilities are relatively close to family members for ongoing communication and support as they continue their rehabilitaton. Additionally, these communities rely on the jobs provided by these facilities out of economic necessity. I support all means to prevent facility closures in these two communiities.

Dr. G. Sue McCann

Licensed clinical psychologist HI, CA 23100

IYC Murphysboro is and has been a monumental waste of taxpayer dollars. It has operated at less than half offender capacity for at least ten years. All while being fully staffed with higher than average pay scales. Staff at this facility have enjoyed up to three paid vacations a year since the facilities opening. This is unheard of in this business. Most facilities in Illinois are overcrowded and understaffed. One paid vacation a year is a luxury and overtime is rampant. Less than 40% of the facilities' employees live in Jackson county so impact there would be minimal. The facility is fairly new and will not sit idle for long. The state will utilize the building and land for something more productive. There are several state buildings in the area that are in need of repair or are rented that would be better off at this location. such as: ATC Carbondale, Marion parole office, Illinois State Garage Carbondale, to name just a few. The perfect solution for Corrections would be an adult work camp. This would alleviate the overcrowding issues and provide a real worker service for many of the economically depressed towns in this area. The IYC advocates will state that these youth already provide this service but it is simply not true. The state mandates school hours during the day and there are federal child labor laws that prevent the kids from working. Frankly, I cannot believe that someone has not yet been put through the ringer for the things that they have done, The state by contract will offer most of the employees the same jobs at other facilities. The only jobs that will be lost are contract jobs that the state pays too much for anyway, such as nurses and drug counselors, around 8 employees.

Michael Eldridge

Jeanne Queen
13 Laurel Avenue
DuQuoin, IL 62832
October 9, 2011

Dear COGFA Committee

I am an employee of the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro and a proponent of keeping this facility open.

The dedicated staff at IYC – Murphysboro have played a vital role in changing the lives of 4,000 troubled youth that have passed through our doors since we opened in 1997. Almost a quarter, (24.6%) of these youth have left our facility having earned an 8th grade diploma, high school diploma or GED. This is quite an accomplishment during an average stay of 6 months.

We understand that the impact we have on these youth today can make a tremendous difference in their lives. Recently, when a Teen Center was suggested as an incentive, the staff at IYC – Murphysboro donated money to purchase a pool table and several staff donated Play Stations and Video Games.

IYC – Murphysboro is unique and can accommodate youth in a dormitory style setting instead of a more traditional prison type setting. This type of setting is the trend that is encouraged by the John Howard Association and the Juvenile Justice Initiative, the very people who now advocate closing our doors. By shuttering our facility, minimum security level youth will be thrust into larger facilities and forced to co-habitate with maximum level youth, some convicted of violent crimes. Additionally, our facility was designed with a wing to accommodate female youth in addition to males. At the present time, all female youth, regardless of their crimes, are held at IYC – Warrenville and forced to co-habitate, dine and attend school together.

IYC – Murphysboro is one of the newest, state of the art facilities in the State. The buildings are in excellent condition and the property is owned by the State. It doesn't make sense to move these youth from a clean, safe and secure environment where they receive individual attention and are excelling in Education. The Department of Juvenile Justice has kept our population at around 50 to intentionally distort the cost per youth to justify closing the facility. If we were at maximum capacity of 108, the cost per youth would be less than half what the Department is reporting. Surely there are 108 youth in the State of Illinois who need this type of environment. Instead of closing us down, fill us up and let us change the lives of more youth before it is too late for them.

Southern Illinois is currently experiencing an average of 10% unemployment. Losing 101 jobs at IYC – Murphysboro would be devastating to the community, as the economic impact study has shown. The stress of not knowing what our future holds, the possibility of being unemployed, having to relocate and uproot our families is causing great emotional strain on the employees of IYC – Murphysboro.

We understand that tough choices must be made. But please consider the effects your decision will have on the youth and employees of IYC – Murphysboro.

Respectfully,

Jeanne Queen
Employee of IYC - Murphysboro

Please DO NOT close IYC in Murphysboro, Illinois.

I do NOT work there, nor do I have any relatives working there, but we need jobs protected in Southern Illinois.

Thank you,
Kelly Higgerson
Marion, Illinois 62959
618-841-5595

In short, in my 23 years working for the state, I have missed only one day of work, never been late and always tried to do my job to the best of my abilities. I simply want to work. I am against the closing of Illinois Youth Center Murphysboro as well as the other facilities and see this doing more harm than good. I would like my testimony to be a written statement filed.

Respectfully:

Scott Timmons
3519 Hwy 4
Vergennes, IL 62994

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing as a concerned citizen and proponent of keeping the IYC center open in Murphysboro, IL.

These proposed closures in Illinois will adversely affect the lives of their employees, and add to the high levels of unemployment in Southern Illinois.

Most importantly, the clients that they serve will experience the greatest loss. Please reconsider the closure.

Sincerely,

Michael Ebersohl
Du Quoin, IL

Hello,

My name is Herbert Underwood. I have been employed at IYC Murphysboro for 14 years as both a Youth Supervisor and a Corrections Food Service Supervisor. I am against the closure of our facility as well as the closure of Chester Mental Health Center. The closing of these two facilities will have an economic impact on Southern Illinois which will well outweigh any good which may be intended. I will be at the COGFA hearing in Murphysboro as an opponent of the closure.

Thank you,

Herbert Underwood
413 E Haney Rd
Carbondale, IL 62901

I oppose iyc of murphysboro closing down.

Marinda Riecan

I am in fierce opposition to the closure of the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro, IL. Such a closure would create a devastating situation in regards to employment and services that families and troubled youth have come to rely on. While I am of the mindset that something needs to be done to reduce or eliminate spending at the state level, I do believe there are better solutions than the closure of facilities such as IYC Murphysboro. In an economy where employment of any kind is difficult to come by, closure of IYC Murphysboro would result in numerous former employees searching for work in an already depressed economy. Please reconsider the possibility of closing this facility by measuring the impact it would have on the lives of Illinois citizens.

Thank you

Lyndsay Hughes
404 E. Illinois, Carterville, IL

As a concerned citizen, and taxpayer I ask that IYC-Murphysboro stay open and not be closed. Closing IYC-Murphysboro will only put many people out of work, drastically hurt the economy of many towns in Southern Illinois, and change the lives for the worst of the juvenile inmates that are housed at IYC - Murphysboro. Please consider keeping IYC-Murphysboro OPEN in order to keep unnecessary hardships for taxpayers employed at IYC-Murphysboro, and the juvenile inmates that are housed there.

Thank you,

Joseph Hollis

To whom it may concern,

I am a very strong proponent to keep IYC open! It would be quite a shame to see this close, creating a great disservice to so many. This youth center in Murphysboro has helped so many & God willing will continue to do so. It would be an unfortunate shame if the Murphysboro IYC closes its doors! Please, I urge you not to let that happen.

One very concerned citizen,
Laurie Lesley

The youth camp in Murphysboro provides a much needed service. Please reconsider the closing . Many people depend on that facility to provide for their families. Many more depend on it to make their communities safer in the long run by helping turn boys into law abiding men!

You may not remember what people said to you , but you will always remember how they made you feel.

Beth

Please, as a concerned citizen I am requesting that the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro,IL remain open. The closure would cause an undue hardship to so many people. Illinois government needs to start re-thinking how they are operating, before we lose any more jobs. People are fed up and will eventually decide to leave.

Sincerely,
D.S. Raef

The economic impact to Southern Illinois would be devastating!

KEEP OUR FACILITIES OPEN!

Chris Barker

While knowing the individuals who will have to adjust their lives with a closure of IYC-MPB, I empathize with their desire for stability, knowing what a lousy investment the current facility]] working for the current administration (DJJ) -- is a LOUSY utilization of resources. With less than half the population housed only 6 years ago(throughout DJJ and only one-quarter of IYC -- MPB), several DJJ facilities should be closed.

In fact, with the obsenity that is DJJ (with more than twice the velocity of recidivism (at IYC -- MPB) and the nearly tripling of the per bed costs, leaving it open makes no sense. Closing the entire dept. and re-evaluating what to do with Juvenile criminals can occur in the legislature. With the 5 year experiment in failure (that is DJJ) the legislature can set viable goals for a "corrections" process/dept. Treating youth is possible, but the DJJ isn't the way (unless you really want a 80 -- 100% failure rate for youth entrusted to the State). Transferring the building to DOC as a new Work Release center could be a very effective cost savings for that dept. and program.

Most line staff at IYC - MPB can easily be obsorbed into nearby DJJ or DOC facilities. Several managers (who frankly lack any management skills) can be retired/laid off.

Respectfully,

Mark A. Pearson, M.A.
Psychologist III (retired)

Please don't take away any more southern Illinois jobs. There is nothing down here for people to find work in.

Ed Davis

Please Please Please save the Illinois Youth Center!!! Southern Illinois is becoming desolate.....we need all the jobs we have and more.....Please DON'T close it!!!!

Thanks for your time!!!

Debbie Olinger

My name is Julie Nolen. I am a nurse at IYC Murphysboro. My husband and I have worked there for about 7 years. We have watched the demise of the facility since the initiation of the Department of Juvenile Justice. Their goal is just that. It almost seems it was created to destroy itself. When I began working there in 2004 it was a boot camp. It was an excellent program. It taught the youth to respect others and gave them the structure and discipline that they had never had in their lives. The youth left our facility proud. They had accomplished something. Many walking away with diplomas and their GED's. Some even earned college scholarships. Our recidivism rates were lower. The employees there were proud of the work that they did. I was proud to become a part of that. When the Department of Juvenile Justice was created things began to change. The transition to this new "therapeutic" model was being implemented. It is the exact opposite. We were not given a new program to follow. It was all trial and a lot of error. Here we are today with an average population of 50 youth. That is not our choice. We would love to have as many youth that we can. We are able to house 108 youth. The administrative staff of DJJ will not give us anymore youth. In fact, we have been directed to send our youth to IYC Pere Marquette. The Juvenile Justice Initiative and the John Howard Association are suggesting that our youth would be better treated in these "Community Based Programs". This seems pretty vague to me. I am not exactly sure what these programs are or if they even exist. These incarcerated youth rob people at gun point, commit arson, commit battery, and assault people with weapons. Are these the type of kids that you want living in your community, attending public schools with your children, and living in your neighborhood? Many of these youth are repeat offenders. If there are no consequences for their actions, these problems will only get worse. When the boot camp program was first initiated it had the lowest rate of recidivism in the nation! That is impressive. Now the recidivism rate is at it's highest since the initiation of the Department of Juvenile Justice. If boot camp is used to mold our American soldiers, it should be good enough to mold our troubled youth.

I spoke at the hearing on behalf of my fellow coworkers and how our families will be affected. We have a lot of pride in what we do for our youth. Not only are we losing our jobs, but we are losing a job that we are proud of. Jobs are scarce in Southern Illinois. My Dad was a coal miner in the region and has been through several layoffs throughout my childhood. He later became employed by GTE (Frontier Communications) and has worked full time all through his treatment for cancer for the past 5 years. That sort of work ethic is hard to come by. That is the sort of work ethic that many of us have because of our hard working parents. We want to work! That is almost rare these days. We are taxpaying citizens. We do not want welfare or link cards that our tax dollars have paid for. The uncertainty of not knowing if we will be able to support our families is so scary. I am asking you to please recommend that IYC Murphysboro stay open. We have a lot to offer. We would love to bring back what we once had and prove that we CAN make a difference in the lives of our Illinois youth!! So....I am completely and whole heartedly OPPOSE the closure of IYC Murphysboro.

Thank you for your time and listening to us at our public hearing. It is not often that voices of the front line staff get to be heard and we truly appreciate your time.

Julie Nolen, RN

Dear Governor Quinn/State Legislators:

I am writing to express my concern/disbelief regarding the possible closure of the Illinois youth Center in Murphysboro and the mental health facility in Chester.

I believe the state will be in an even bigger financial crisis if we do not stop penalizing the WORKING people. The employees who are at risk of losing their jobs are tax-paying citizens who CONTRIBUTE to the economy, of Southern Illinois and the entire state. How could it possibly be a solution to our financial woes to lay off these workers and put them on the UNemployment rolls? Talk about robbing Peter to pay Paul....Surely you can do the math.

I dare say our state economy is not in dire straits as a result of these state employees. We Illinoisans (the ones with jobs) are being taxed to death. When will you stop penalizing the working person? How about eliminating the so-called entitlements for the NON-working folks?

I remember my parents used to call public aid "relief" - in their day (they were born in the 1920's) - it was just that; a temporary fix, not a way of life to be passed on to the next generation.

When are you going to acknowledge the writing on the wall? Oh, wait, I know: When you find yourselves in the unemployment line.

PLEASE do not make the mistake of closing these facilities; the consequences will be long term.

Respectfully,
Sandra K. Meacham
Du Quoin IL

Dear Honorable COGFA Members:

My name is Penny Phoenix and I am submitting my comments not only as the spouse of an IYC employee but also as a concerned citizen. I attended the public hearing on Wednesday, October 12 and am stunned by the testimony, or lack there of, from the individuals and/or groups who support closing this facility.

At the beginning of the hearing the question was asked about why this facility was chosen over any of the other juvenile facilities in the state. The answer given was that this particular facility helped fill the gap in the budget. Seriously, I hope that is not the reason this facility is on the chopping block. I mean, you can easily say any state facility closure can help fill the gap in the budget. But why was this facility chosen over many older, smaller facilities? Not that any state facility should be closed, but why not an older facility which would require a lot of maintenance and upkeep? The facility in Murphysboro is 15 years old and has the capacity to hold 150 juveniles.

Supporters for the closure also mentioned during the hearing that it is better for the juveniles if they are closer to their family during their time of incarceration. Basically, testimony was presented that most of the juveniles come from the north part of the state and that this facility is just too far south. So, in other words, the lack of juveniles in the criminal system from Southern Illinois actually hurts keeping this facility open. That is by far the most absurd thing I every heard. Though it may be true for some juveniles to be close to family, it may not be true for others. I think it has been shown that a lack of good parenting and surrounding himself/herself with the wrong friends are major reasons juveniles make bad choices and bad decisions in life. To me, it makes no sense to have these juveniles near family and friends who very well may have contributed to their problems in the first place.

Testimony was also presented that most employees at IYC Murphysboro would be able to transfer to another juvenile facility or adult facility within 50 miles. Though there is another juvenile facility in Southern Illinois, it is 45 miles away, a good one hour drive, and undoubtedly would not be able to accommodate all IYC Murphysboro employees. There are also several adult facilities in Southern Illinois but that would mean that most IYC employees would require to take a substantial pay cut. Although it would be a job, it is very unfair to ask employees, several of which who have many years of service with the State of Illinois, to take a pay cut of approximately \$1200 a month.

Basically, I did not hear a good reason why IYC Murphysboro should be closed except that it helps "bridge the gap in the budget". My husband has worked 15 years for the State and has been a loyal, hard working employee, as have all the employees of IYC Murphysboro. None of these employees deserve this. I only hope that you take all comments in consideration and make your recommendation that IYC Murphysboro should not be closed. If, however, your recommendation is for the closure, I hope there is a supported reason. I would hate to have to tell my children that their father lost his job because it "filled the gap in the budget".

Thank you for allowing my comments and may God bless you.

Sincerely,

Penny Phoenix

To Whom it May Concern:

As a long time resident of Southern Illinois, I have great concern about the possible closing of IYC and Chester Mental Health. I do have family members who work at both, but along with that....both facilities are assets to their communities, providing service, bringing resources and economy to the region.

The employees who might lose their jobs will either have to relocate, or find different jobs. Both of those options are difficult in this time of lack of jobs anyway. Many have been state workers for a long time. Can you imagine how many state employees will be scrambling to try for the same few jobs that may exist somewhere in IL.

Please reconsider your apparent decisions to close these facilities, many lives are at stake at being drastically changed.

Thank you.

Paula Goebel

Retired Teacher Southern Illinois

It is of my opinion that this is not area that needs to be cut by the state. With so much wasteful spending don't cut need facilities!

David Russell

The economic impact to Southern Illinois would be devastating!

KEEP OUR FACILITIES OPEN!

Chris Barker

My name is Barb Reardon, President of AFSCME Local 1048. I represent all Agencies within the Southern 32 Counties that are not facilities. These Agencies include DCFS and DHS. I write in opposition of the closure of ALL facilities but specifically the Murphysboro IYC at this point. Prior to their incarceration with the Dept of Juvenile Justice/Corrections the Employees of DCFS have already spent years and countless hours looking for every viable option to help these kids and deter them from the destructive paths they were on. Putting them on the street again is simply not an answer. These kids have committed crimes and have been deemed unsafe in society for at least a short period of time.

The Dept of Children and Family services is well over the allowable cases set by the National BH Consent Decree in many areas by almost double and triple. DCFS simply does not have funding nor manpower to handle the influx of cases that releasing these kids back on the street will cause. Further DCFS employees are not equipped to handle the violent outburst and attacks that are brought on by these kids. Our Employees use their personal cars to transport children and none of them have equipment installed in their cars to prevent an angry or disillusioned teenager from causing great harm to the vehicle, the Employee and/or the Child while driving them to and from various destinations.

Many of the families of these children have already given up on them and going home is not an option for them. Foster homes will not be available to children who would probably not possibly, cause disruption and harm to other children in the homes. Nor can I imagine putting them in Adult facilities would be conducive to their reform but would further exacerbate the problems that put them there in the first place.

As housing then becomes an issue so does feeding them and providing their medical care which falls back on the State of Illinois in the form of Medicaid and Food Stamps. I am a Human Service Caseworker and can attest how frustrating and confusing navigating the State Welfare System is for Adults. Now you're asking these kids who have already demonstrated numerous times their inability to cope with Societies Rules to come into the Local DHS office, make application and follow through with the process? If not, then who will be paid to do this for them? Who will protect the DHS Caseworker from harm when these children misunderstand a policy or procedure and become angry while they have already shown a propensity for violence? Who then is going to make sure these children get education? Counseling? Funding for DHS has been gutted including SIRSS and Substance and Alcohol Abuse Counseling programs. Who will transport these kids to the services that will become instrumental in their reform?

After all of this and more I'm sure I've missed have you saved any money? I believe it would have to be quite a substantial amount of money saved to put innocent citizens of our Communities back at risk if these wayward children no longer have a setting and structure devised to remove them from society long enough to put them on a life path which does not harm themselves or others.

I respectfully ask that all things considered you realize this proposed Closure is little more than a Political Machination that should not be allowed to continue to disrupt the lives of many hard working, dedicated Employees and the reform of those who so desperately need them.

Barb Reardon, President
AFSCME Local 1048
618-521-5682

Dear members of the Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability,

I would like to voice my opposition to the proposed closure of the Illinois Youth Center in Murphysboro. As others have stated, the facility is one of the newest in the state. Ostensibly, the physical structure should be the most efficient to operate, as opposed to a sprawling compound composed of aging buildings. It is also the facility that most closely resembles the ideal setting envisioned by the Department of Juvenile Justice - smaller, with everything under one roof. Staff members have easier access to the kids and vice-versa. The kids are housed on a dormitory style unit, which encourages positive socialization, not in solitary cells. It was also pointed out at the hearing by my colleague, Mr. Cline, that the facility was built with funds provided by the federal government. How much sense does it make to close a facility that has been paid for, yet continue to RENT another, much older facility. Based simply on these points, it is clear that IYC-Murphysboro should not be chosen for closure. In addition, the State of Illinois is under contract with AFSCME until June, 2012 and the Governor signed an agreement not to close any facilities or lay off employees until that time. Can a legally binding contract simply be ignored? The closure of IYC-Murphysboro would be a tremendous loss for the community, not to mention the devastating effects it will have upon us, the employees. Surely, there are other options for closing the budget gap. I implore you to thoroughly consider the projected savings against the projected costs of closing the facility. All things considered, the damage would be greater than the gain.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Michael Nolen
Youth and Family Specialist
IYC-Murphysboro
201 W. Lindell
W. Frankfort, IL 62896
Dear Mr. Long,

I wanted to wait until the end of the comment period before offering my comments to you and your commission so that I could get a feel for what the COGFA commission's position might be after the public hearings were held in Murphysboro. I viewed your interview with the Channel 3 news, and know where you stand now, so, I would like to offer my comments for your consideration.

Mr. Long, on October 12th, nearly 4 hours of testimony and questions from both sides of the isle concerning the IYC was given. I am an employee of that facility, as well as the President of the Local Union there, and therefore have obvious concerns about the future of IYC Murphysboro.

I don't believe that I am biased in my opinions of what we can offer the young offenders that are sent to us. I feel that we do give these young people the very best of what we have to offer in terms of counseling, treatment, and rehabilitation, and are well within the guidelines of the advocacy groups that gave testimony that day. I just don't understand why they want us shuttered.

Sir, our employee panel of speakers on October 12th outlined a very clear picture of what we do there, and just how much this facility falls exactly within what the advocacy groups such as the John Howard Association, and Elizabeth Clark of the Juvenile Justice Initiative wanted us to do; provide a therapeutic environment with and a lower number of youth to staff ratio. Employee testimonies stated this.

Since becoming the Department of Juvenile Justice in 2006, we have seen many changes to the programs we once were. I won't dwell on those changes, other than as a facility, we have adapted well to all of the changes that were expected of us. If you were to look at the most recent reports from the John Howard Association, you would see that we had very favorable results of their latest tour of the facility. Betsy Clark even came to the facility a few weeks ago, unannounced, and stated that she wanted juvenile facilities closed, but not necessarily IYC Murphysboro.

We have become, in my opinion, a model of the therapeutic and rehabilitative environment that was and is wanted for our young people. If you were to go into our facility, you would agree that it does look more like a high school building than a juvenile detention/lock up facility. Honestly, I just don't see how anyone could want a facility such as this to be anything less than what it already is. This facility is set up to do what Betsy Clark and the John Howard Association are advocating for.

I continue to hear about the "Community Based Program" initiatives. What exactly are these initiatives? I must remind you that the same people that advocated for the implementation of DJJ, are the same people spearheading this idea for CBP's. I have no doubt that there is substance behind the idea, but seriously, are we really ready and prepared for this change to take place so quickly? I have to say NO, we are not. DJJ also was just someone's idea at one time, and because it was ram-rodged through and became a reality so quickly, and without proper implementation of the goals it defined in the beginning, it failed miserably. As was stated on October 12th, the failure of DJJ was for but a couple of reasons; no funding and no after care programs.

Mr. Long, we cannot be doing justice for these young people by simply changing programs every 5 years. There must be a clearly defined beginning, but more importantly, there must be a clearly defined ending that is followed through on. Everyone in the chain of custody of these kids must be part of the process. I do not believe that an end result or goal has been made clear enough to start closing down facilities now, and especially a facility such as IYC Murphysboro. If you were to speak to the men and women who work within other state operated departments such as DCFS, you would find out that they are not enthusiastic at all about these community based initiatives that are being proposed. There just isn't enough information about what they really are all about. Are the advocacy groups even talking to the organizations that will be responsible to deal with community based programming? I ask this question because recently, I spoke to the president of one of the local unions here in Southern Illinois who works for DHS, and she says that not only are they are not ready for this to happen, they are FAR from being ready for CBP'S.

Other considerations I have to ask are, that you get the full report about the accuracy of the information that is being reported to you and in the news media. It is not accurate information. I'm talking about the number of youth this facility is currently rated for, which was sanctioned by Director Arthur Bishop. If you look at the attachment of the IYC Murphysboro Overview, our maximum capacity at IYC Murphysboro is 108 youth, not the 156 that continues being reported. These are the real numbers, and they are in line with what the John Howard Association and other advocacy groups have wanted for years; lower numbers of youth at smaller facilities, in order to give them more one on one interaction with the people helping them. We have given them this at IYC Murphysboro. And now, here these advocacies are, using the lower numbers that they suggested to us to justify cost inefficiencies, therefore justifying the closure recommendation. Sir, it just isn't fair, and it certainly isn't right! Real people's lives and livelihoods are at stake here.

Because of the model our program offers, I would think the cost effectiveness could be easily achieved at IYC Murphysboro if our beds were filled to capacity with the low risk youth currently within DJJ. If you were to see our facility yourself, I believe you would agree that it is an environment for the therapeutic treatment that we all want for these young offenders. If the total capacity of this facility were used efficiently by using all 6 housing units and filling them, it wouldn't require much more staffing than currently exists at IYC Murphysboro.

Mr. Long, I would certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you on the phone, because there is so much more I can say that could give you a much clearer picture of why this institution is so valuable for the youth of this great state. To turn it into a DOC facility would be a great mistake. Besides that, the economic impact wouldn't be much different than what the current studies have shown would be by simply closing the facility. The personal impact stories of what would happen to the displaced employees is another subject of concern that I would most definitely like to speak to you about at your earliest convenience by phone. I will include contact information below.

I would like to thank you for your considerations, and for reading my comments Mr. Long. We are all hoping and praying that we can continue to provide the services to these youth and to the State of Illinois at IYC Murphysboro.

Respectfully,
Greg Foreman
President Local 2335
IYC Murphysboro
103 West Elkhville Road
Elkhville, Illinois 62932
(618) 924-5995

My name is Wes Bradley and I'm a juvenile justice specialist at IYC murphysboro. I'm asking you to do your best to help keep the facility open and a juvenile institution.

We at murphysboro have done everything that the John Howard Association has asked of us. When we were a boot camp they said we were too strict so we started doing the things they said we should do. Now that we do that they decide that it's not what's best for the kids and we should be closed. How much money will the state waste listening to organizations like this before they finally decide what's best for the kids and the community they are from.

Murphysboro was paid for by the federal government and is a new facility and there are much older and some that the state leases still in operation. I don't want to see any place close but if it's going to happen one of these facilities would make much more sense than the one in southern Illinois, where there are no comparable jobs.

Thanks for your time and consideration for keeping these places open.

Wes Bradley

I support the closure of Jacksonville and Mabley because it is the right thing to do for people with disabilities.

Regards,
Ann Myrna
