

THE GREEN WIRE

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Sen. Green Will File Bill to Protect the Mentally Disabled in Private Facilities

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Sen. Timothy Green, D-Spanish Lake, plans to introduce legislation to protect the mentally disabled in private facilities.

Families of those served by the state’s habilitation centers for the developmentally disabled convened in the Capitol today to announce the upcoming filing of legislation to maintain state-operated centers while instituting standards, oversight and accountability for Missouri’s troubled private group home industry.

“In recent months a series of news accounts and state audits have revealed serious abuse and neglect in privately operated facilities for the developmentally disabled.” said Sen. Green.

Deficiencies included staff poorly trained and supervised, scant reporting requirements and a lack of accountability. The state has been forcing habilitation center residents into private facilities this past year.

Families from centers across Missouri decried the state’s transfer of clients into the private group home industry as resources for Habilitation centers are cut.

“Many of the provisions in the upcoming legislation were modeled on standards found in the state’s facilities and in recently enacted regulations for nursing homes and foster care providers.” stated Sen. Green.

The legislation would:

- Ban further employment anywhere of staff found to be abusive
- Open private facilities to the scrutiny of the state’s Sunshine laws
- Mandate reporting of abuse and neglect, including medication errors, in private facilities
- Require staff turnover reporting to the General Assembly

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- Require dismissal of private contractor employees who violate state laws and rules
- Require private facility staff to have training comparable to state-center employees, to be paid for by the private provider
- Place a moratorium on any Hab center transfers to private facilities until the legislation is fully implemented.

“This isn’t about a Hab center,” said Mickey Slawson, president of the Parents Association at Bellefontaine Habilitation Center. “This is about children, family members, thousands of them across Missouri, who need care and have a right to lead a life with dignity and security. There are those who would turn their backs on them, but we’re not going to let them do that without a fight.”

“These Hab centers are communities within communities and many residences that reside in them can not survive in other placements.” said Sen. Green. “Many of the adult residents at the habilitation center have lived at the facility for over 20 years, and some for even 50 years. The habilitation center is their home. The employees and other residents are their families.”
