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State of Minnesota

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION

HOUSE FILE No. 1680

March 12, 2009

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The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight

March 15, 2010

Committee Recommendation and Adoption of Report:

To Pass

Read Second Time

- 1.1 A resolution
- 1.2 apologizing on behalf of citizens of the state to all persons with mental illness and
- 1.3 developmental and other disabilities who have been wrongfully committed to state
- 1.4 institutions.
- 1.5 WHEREAS, since the founding of the state hospitals, now called regional treatment
- 1.6 centers, in 1866, tens of thousands of Minnesotans with mental illnesses and developmental
- 1.7 and other disabilities have been removed from Minnesota communities and committed to live
- 1.8 in state institutions, where many of these Minnesotans have died and been buried in unmarked
- 1.9 graves or graves that bore only a number; and
- 1.10 WHEREAS, some residents of these state institutions were forced to labor without
- 1.11 compensation; and
- 1.12 WHEREAS, some residents of these state institutions were subjected to medical
- 1.13 experiments and procedures without their consent, including the routine subjection of women
- 1.14 inmates to involuntary sterilizations; and
- 1.15 WHEREAS, some residents of these state institutions were subjected to punitive shock
- 1.16 treatments, frontal lobotomies, aversive treatments, and isolation; and
- 1.17 WHEREAS, thousands of children grew up in these state institutions learning none of the
- 1.18 comforts, joys, and cultural norms that are learned in family life; and
- 1.19 WHEREAS, thousands of parents whose children required intensive care were forced to
- 1.20 make painful decisions about whether to institutionalize their children or to provide all the care
- 1.21 and education they required themselves, incurring in the process immeasurable financial, career,
- 1.22 social, and familial burdens; and

2.1 WHEREAS, parents of persons with developmental disabilities were advised by
2.2 Minnesota's medical professionals to institutionalize their children, and to break their familial
2.3 bonds by making them wards of the state irrespective of the family's and community's ability to
2.4 support and nurture these children; and

2.5 WHEREAS, these fellow Minnesotans were portrayed by Minnesota public officials as
2.6 subhuman organisms, as deviant individuals to be feared by society, and as eternal children
2.7 unaccountable for their behavior and incapable of speaking for themselves or shaping their own
2.8 lives, which greatly diminished their fellow citizens' ability and willingness to accept them for
2.9 their own unique qualities; and

2.10 WHEREAS, institutional care for persons with developmental disabilities has been
2.11 scientifically demonstrated to be detrimental to people's basic development, including social
2.12 development, development of self-determination, and the development of the basic skills of
2.13 daily living; and

2.14 WHEREAS, Minnesotans once viewed this institutional treatment as acceptable and
2.15 subjected tens of thousands of citizens to it, but now recognize how wrong this treatment was; and

2.16 WHEREAS, Minnesota's state institutions are closing and, through this process, their
2.17 history and the acknowledgment of our collective responsibility for it may be forgotten; and

2.18 WHEREAS, people who were relegated to state institutions and their families have never
2.19 received a formal apology from the state; and

2.20 WHEREAS, the states of Virginia, Oregon, South Carolina, California, and North Carolina
2.21 have apologized for similar actions towards people with disabilities in their own states; NOW,
2.22 THEREFORE,

2.23 BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota on behalf of the citizens of
2.24 the state that the state apologize publicly to all persons with mental illness and developmental and
2.25 other disabilities who have been wrongfully committed to state institutions, acknowledging that it
2.26 regrets this history of institutionalization of persons with those disabilities, and that it commits
2.27 itself in their memory to move steadfastly to ensure that all Minnesotans with those disabilities
2.28 who in the future turn to the state for assistance will receive the assistance they need.

2.29 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is
2.30 directed to prepare an enrolled copy of this resolution and transmit it publicly to appropriate
2.31 organizations of people with disabilities and to the news media.