

YEAR OF THE APOLOGY



Minnesota House of Representatives

H.F. No. 1680, 1st Engrossment - 86th Legislative Session (2009-2010) Posted on May 15, 2010

1. 1A resolution

1. 2apologizing on behalf of citizens of the state to all persons with mental illness and
1. 3developmental and other disabilities who have been wrongfully committed to state
1. 4institutions.

1. 5WHEREAS, since the founding of the state hospitals, now called regional treatment
1. 6centers, in 1866, tens of thousands of Minnesotans with mental illnesses and developmental
1. 7and other disabilities have been removed from Minnesota communities and committed to live
1. 8in state institutions, where many of these Minnesotans have died and been buried in unmarked
1. 9graves or graves that bore only a number; and

1. 10WHEREAS, some residents of these state institutions were forced to labor without
1. 11compensation; and

1. 12WHEREAS, some residents of these state institutions were subjected to medical
1. 13experiments and procedures without their consent, including the routine subjection of women
1. 14inmates to involuntary sterilizations; and

1. 15WHEREAS, some residents of these state institutions were subjected to punitive shock
1. 16treatments, frontal lobotomies, aversive treatments, and isolation; and

1. 17WHEREAS, thousands of children grew up in these state institutions learning none of the
1. 18comforts, joys, and cultural norms that are learned in family life; and

1. 19WHEREAS, thousands of parents whose children required intensive care were forced to
1. 20make painful decisions about whether to institutionalize their children or to provide all the care
1. 21and education they required themselves, incurring in the process immeasurable financial, career,
1. 22social, and familial burdens; and

2. 1WHEREAS, parents of persons with developmental disabilities were sometimes advised to
2. 2institutionalize their children, and to break their familial bonds by making them wards of the state
2. 3irrespective of the family's and community's ability to support and nurture these children; and
2. 4WHEREAS, these fellow Minnesotans were portrayed by some as subhuman organisms, as
2. 5deviant individuals to be feared by society, and as eternal children unaccountable for their behavior
2. 6and incapable of speaking for themselves or shaping their own lives, which greatly diminished
2. 7their fellow citizens' ability and willingness to accept them for their own unique qualities; and

2. 8WHEREAS, institutional care for persons with developmental disabilities has been
2. 9scientifically demonstrated to be detrimental to people's basic development, including social
2. 10development, development of self-determination, and the development of the basic skills of
2. 11daily living; and

2. 12WHEREAS, many Minnesotans once viewed this institutional treatment as acceptable and
2. 13subjected tens of thousands of citizens to it, but now recognize how wrong this treatment was; and

2. 14WHEREAS, Minnesota's state institutions are closing and, through this process, their
2. 15history and the acknowledgment of our collective responsibility for it may be forgotten; and

2. 16WHEREAS, people who were relegated to state institutions and their families have never
2. 17received a formal apology from the state; and

2. 18WHEREAS, the states of Virginia, Oregon, South Carolina, California, and North Carolina
2. 19have apologized for similar actions towards people with disabilities in their own states; NOW,
2. 20THEREFORE,

2. 21BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota on behalf of the citizens of
2. 22the state that the state apologize publicly to all persons with mental illness and developmental and
2. 23other disabilities who have been wrongfully committed to state institutions, acknowledging that it
2. 24regrets this history of institutionalization of persons with those disabilities, and that it commits
2. 25itself in their memory to move steadfastly to help Minnesotans with those disabilities who in the
2. 26future turn to the state for services to receive them in the least restrictive manner.

2. 27BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is
2. 28directed to prepare an enrolled copy of this resolution and transmit it publicly to appropriate
2. 29organizations of people with disabilities and to the news media.