

December 3, 2021

Governor Hochul:

This letter comes to inform you and to request your support with terminating Corporal Punishment/Electric Shock torture of Children and Young Adults with Special Needs for corrective behavior at the Judge Rotenberg Center in Canton, Massachusetts, that poses as a school. JRC should have never been an option on the Department of Education's approved school list in New York City. The issue regarding JRC and the torture of Children with Special Needs, specifically Andre McCollins; I have been an advocate on this issue that has garnered International attention with Andre's mother, Cheryl McCollins since 2012.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/nov/16/judge-rotenberg-center-massachusetts-electric-shocks>

Andre was the only visually documented case showing the practice of Electric Shock torture at JRC. The video shows Andre tied to a four point board, being shocked for seven hours because he refused to take off his coat. Andre was left in a catatonic state for three days with flesh burns and mental trauma. He still suffers from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) until this day. There was a sensational court case in the State of Massachusetts regarding this issue.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJJGafrOpXQ>

Not to mention, countless testimonies from former students in the past, and as of recent. If you go to Google and type in "Judge Rotenberg Center" volumes of information come up exposing the practice of torture at this Center. This issue is no secret!

<https://www.today.com/video/massachusetts-facility-uses-controversial-shock-device-to-modify-behavior-110975045859>

There are Disability organizations and Advocates that continue to press for the closure, termination of criminal activity, the return of our New York State children from JRC and terminating the use of the electroshock device. Organizations such as: ADAPT and Author/Disability Advocate Nancy Weiss University of Delaware and Director of the National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities; who contributed to the book entitled "Pain and Shock in America: Politics, Advocacy and the Controversial Treatment of People with Disabilities by Jan Nisbett; a book that was just released October 2021. Ms. Weiss has been Advocating for the closure of JRC for over 35 years, and has been also working with Cheryl McCollins and I to expose the happenings at JRC.

<https://www.amazon.com/Pain-Shock-America-Controversial-Disabilities/dp/1684580749>

Attorney Jared Rich also released a commercial about JRC that included Cheryl McCollins, and I. The commercial expounds upon political officials that supported the practice.

<https://youtu.be/UsBOC9Vy1rU>

To date, Cheryl and I have managed to spread awareness to Senator Jabari Brisport, who after approximately six months of discussion is in the process of devising a Bill to stop sending NYS children to this Center. Dr. Jackie Cody from the National Action Network Education Committee and Nancy Weiss, previously mentioned; has met with Senator Brisport and have been assisting us with this process.

“New York State sends children with special needs-- and money for their care-- to the Judge Rotenberg Center in Massachusetts. One of the tools this school uses to discipline the children placed in their care is an electric shock device. According to NBC News, the Judge Rotenberg Center may be the only place in the world to use electric shocks to modify behavior in children with disabilities. The school's practices have been classified by the United Nations as torture.

As a pain physician who has treated survivors of torture (including Vietnamese and Cambodian patients electrocuted by the Khmer Rouge) and as a physician who has treated hundreds of children with disabilities over the course of my career, I am completely opposed to the use of this device. The FDA banned the device although its decision was overturned in court. The Center definitely uses the device as evidenced by numerous court records and personal stories from children turned adults who talked to the press and government officials about their symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

New York State must send a strong message to the school that the cruel and inhumane treatment of children, especially the most vulnerable among us, will not be tolerated."

Dr. Devi Nampiaparampil, MD
MS Associate Professor
NYU Grossman School of Medicine

The safety of the Special Needs population is in your hands. All it takes is the “Stroke your Pen” to sign an Executive Order for the return of our New York State children. It is the hope of all Advocates and Children with Special Needs that you take this issue front and center. Many years has lapsed with the torture that still continues. Children with Special Needs are in desperate need of having elected officials, organizations and individuals to Advocate for them, as they do not have the ability to Advocate for themselves.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Harriet L. Hines
Disability Advocate