

RESOLUTION 4—H.F.No. 1680

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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