

November 2013

I want to thank all of you for what you did to accomplish one of the most difficult and important achievements, not only during my administration but during the history of what I would call the civil rights movement for the disability community.

Over the past centuries, people with disabilities have been not only feared and discriminated against, they have been relegated to the shadows of society. Well intended and humane as it was intended to be, the Brandon Training School was emblematic of those shadows. We learned over the years, largely because of the efforts of both the advocacy community and of people with disabilities themselves, that less restrictive, non institutional settings, provided both more dignity, and more importantly more opportunity for self sufficiency and empowerment than institutional settings.

Because of the courage of the people here today, and the courage of many who are not here, Vermont made the tough decision to change the way we had done things for many years.

Looking back over the last twenty years, we have done the right thing and made the right changes. We have a long way to go before full equality for all in the disability community, but we have made a groundbreaking start, and I am deeply grateful to all of you for your extraordinary courage and leadership.

Warmly and Sincerely yours,

Howard Dean