From: Amber Rauscher
To: Rep. Mike Clampitt
Subject: Oversight and Accountability Needed
Date: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 02:25:24 PM

CITIZENS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL
Established in 1969 by the Church of Scientology to investigate and expose psychiatric violations of human rights

19 January 2021

Re: Oversight and Accountability of "Troubled Teen" Behavioral Industry and Institutional Racism in State Mental Health System

Dear Representative Clampitt,

My name is Amber Rauscher, the Deputy Legal Coordinator of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights International (CCHR), a 51-year mental health watchdog organization that investigates human and civil rights violations in the mental health field. Since 2015, we've regularly kept state legislators and law enforcement agencies apprised of the patient abuses, including restraint deaths in, especially, for-profit psychiatric/behavioral facilities. This has most recently come to a head with highly publicized restraint deaths and a documentary, This is Paris, about Paris Hilton speaking out about her being assaulted and traumatized in one of these behavioral facilities, Provo Canyon behavioral "school" in Utah at the age of 16. Hilton spent 11 months there in 1999 where she was forced to take psychotropic drugs, was placed in solitary confinement and beaten.[1] She helped launch a current petition with the group #BreakingCodeSilence, calling for Provo Canyon and other abusive teen behavioral facilities to be closed.[2]

Detailed examples of current rampant abuse in for-profits psychiatric-behavioral facilities, "wilderness camps," etc., highlight the serious lack of state oversight and accountability 20 years after Hilton's torturous experience. And it is why we are asking you to please act on the need for more stringent regulatory controls. Health and Human Services (HHS) may do inspections (although limited or non-existent during COVID restrictions) which often result in a mere "plan of correction" by the hospital concerned, only for the same abuses to be repeated. The Joint Commission, which gives accreditation to such hospitals, rarely sanctions them.

Meanwhile, just documenting teen abuse in behavioral facilities owned by Universal Health Services (UHS), which has three facilities in North Carolina, reveals that nationwide teens have been physically restrained or dragged to a seclusion room; deadly restraint, with children as young as nine who have died; restraint injuries, including nasal fractures and broken arms; teens body slammed against hospital walls; sexual assaults by both staff and fellow patients; teen suicides that could have been prevented with proper staff monitoring; and much, much more.

UHS is not the only culprit: Other for-profit chains include, but is not limited to, Acadia Healthcare; Sequel Youth and Family Services, which has innocuous sounding "academies" for youths; Strategic Behavioral Health, Signature Behavioral Health, and more.

Sequel, which has one facility in North Carolina, came under national scrutiny in May 2020 when a 16-year-old African American teen, Cornelius Frederick was restrained because he threw a sandwich on the floor, who yelled, "I can't breathe!" before passing out. Thirty hours later, he was dead.[3] [See video: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/video-shows-fatal-restraint-cornelius-fredericks-16-michigan-foster-facility-n1233122]

Compare this to a 60 Minutes II expose in 1998 about falsifying patient records and restraint deaths at Charter Behavioral Health hospitals, of which UHS purchased 12 in 2000 after Charter was forced to file for bankruptcy in the wake of government investigations: https://charlierose.com/videos/19190 You'll see not much has changed-because the oversight and accountability has not been sustained.

Demands are being made right now for states to invest more money into mental health services, especially in light of not only the effects of COVID restrictions but also protests over racial injustice and the mental and emotional impact from this. Such demands need to be evaluated against what these services have previously achieved - *or, more to the point, failed to achieve.*

We are drawing this to state legislative attention again because the lack of accountability has yet to be solved, including many states not keeping records of restraint use and deaths in psychiatric/behavioral facilities or the use of antipsychotics, antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs and electroshock therapy (ECT).

Children are electroshocked in private and state institutions, causing brain damage and memory loss - with few states keeping a full and accurate accounting of how much ECT is given. In North Carolina, we sent a public records request in March this year for the number of people being given electroshock through Medicaid, but did not receive any response to our request.

Restraint Use:

In light of recent events exposing the lethal effects of restraint use, the fact that while Paris Hilton's video reflects the long-term damage from torturous and punitive treatment in a teen behavioral facility 20 years ago, the abuses she encountered happen regularly in such institutions today.

In *People v. Harvey,* 528 N.E.2d 1053, a counselor was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter for the death of a teenaged boy who was forcibly restrained to punish him for nonviolent disobedience. The boy aspirated his vomit during the restraint. *The court noted that the boy was not assaultive until the staff tried to restrain him... punitive use in treatment settings violates the patient's constitutional rights."*[4] (Emphasis added) In the case of Cornelius Frederick this year, three Sequel hospital employees were charged with involuntary manslaughter.

Actions Needed: State-by-State

1. Legislation that requires all psychiatric hospital/behavioral facility restraint deaths to be investigated to determine whether the death constituted involuntary manslaughter or other criminal offense. This should also determine what psychotropic drugs may have been prescribed that reduced the patient's ability to control aggression, especially if goaded by staff. (Many psychiatric drugs can, in

fact, prompt such behavior. See CCHR's report: Psychiatric Drugs: Create Violence & Suicide) There are at least 27 international drug regulatory agency warnings of psychotropic drug adverse effects which include violence, aggression, hostility, mania, psychosis or homicidal ideation.[5]

2. Legislation that enacts stronger safeguards against restraint use, sexual and other physical assault of patients, especially children and adolescents, along with an accountable reporting system. Ideally, restraint use in children would be banned. And stronger penalties would be meted where abuse occurs, including recommendations to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to cut funding to a facility that violates the safety regulations for patients.

The current state of mental health services is one where restraints can be used with very little consequence when patients die. Ideally, both restraint use in children and the practice of electroshock therapy would be prohibited.

Please consider the proposed reforms covered in this letter to ensure accountability in your state's mental health system. Fiscally, this should not be a burden to the state but the implementation of these reforms could save lives. Attached is a sample of abuses documented in the behavioral health industry.

Should you wish any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at amber@cchr.org or at 213-798-3761.

Sincerely,

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CCHR has helped to obtain more than 180 laws worldwide to protect the rights of individuals in the mental health system.

Attachment: 1

A Small Example of Restraint Deaths and Teen Abuses in Behavioral Facilities

- **February 2020:** Sequel Pomegranate in Ohio reached a settlement with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services after facing a license revocation due to use of improper restraints and sexual abuse of patients and violence in the facility. One teen was kicked, punched and improperly restrained by a nurse and mental health aide.[6]In early January 2020, Franklin County Children Services stopped sending children in their custody to Pomegranate due to concerns with how children are being restrained and concerns over violence and sexual abuse over previous months.[7]

- **February 2020:** Sequel Pomegranate in Ohio reached a settlement with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services after facing a license revocation due to use of improper restraints and sexual abuse of patients and violence in the facility. One teen was kicked, punched and improperly restrained

by a nurse and mental health aide.[6]In early January 2020, Franklin County Children Services stopped sending children in their custody to Pomegranate due to concerns with how children are being restrained and concerns over violence and sexual abuse over previous months.[7]

- **August 2019:** Sequel's Red Rock Canyon School in Utah closed after "numerous accounts of mistreatment, abuse, acts of violence and overall disrespect toward residents."[8]Caleb La Chance, a former resident of the facility, who was in foster care from the age of 5, told Oregon legislators in February 2020 that he had been assaulted twice by staff members and had been a part of a riot that left several teens injured.[9]

- **November 2019:** *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported that a 15-year old Oregon boy who had been placed as a foster child at Red Rock had filed a lawsuit against the state officials who sent him to the facility. He alleged Red Rock did not properly train staff, allowed students to restrain each other, including choke holds, and staff mistreated the children.[10]

- **2019:** Media reported 24 incidents of staff being accused of improper restraint at **Red Rock**.[11] Utah's Department of Human Services threatened their license over "understaffing" that had "negatively impacted the program's ability to address violence and sexual misconduct within the program."[12]

- One student, Jesus Lopez, a 17-year-old foster kid, tried to escape after being bullied in **Clarinda Academy** in Iowa, was restrained by staff who took turns pulling his arms back and then throwing him down on the floor. His head hit the floor several times, he said, before he fell unconscious. According to Iowa Dept. of Human Services records, he suffered severe bruising on his forehead, as well as bruising on his arms, legs and back.[13]

- **November 2019:** Liz Spellman, a Pomegranate mental health associate was placed on administrative leave and later fired following an incident in which she laid on top of a teen during an improper restraint and also shoved the teen afterward. She admitted to media that "Improper restraints happen every day in there."

- The Washington Department of Children, Youth and Families stopped placing children at Sequel's Clarinda Academy as children told investigators that staff "put their hands on you and force you to the ground" and staff pulled their elbows behind their backs and then forced them to the ground by putting pressure on the backs of their knees.[14] "Every student reported that restraints they experienced were physically painful and frequently resulted in back, shoulder, and neck pain for several days or weeks," according to a state report.[15]

- **2019:** A 10-year old boy was held in restraints for an hour at the now closed Desert Hills psychiatric facility in New Mexico owned by for-profit behavioral Acadia Healthcare, and then injected with and overdosed on the antipsychotic, Haldol.[16] Desert Hills of New Mexico was "shut down amid egregious abuse allegations, multiple lawsuits and losing its certification from state regulators," according to *The Nashville Post*. It cited seven lawsuits against the facility which included excessive use of restraints on children-more than 30 times in 60 days.[17]

- **2019:** UHS's Shadow Mountain behavioral health in Tulsa, Oklahoma, closed, after health authorities investigated it when children as young as five were separated from their parents and held in dangerous situations. Allegations ranged from medication errors to incidents of sexual misconduct. Internal surveillance videos showed children being repeatedly physically restrained,

including a 9-year-old boy that a mental health technician grabbed by the neck, pushed against a wall, then slammed to the ground.[18]

- **2018:** Max Benson, a 13-year-old child with autism, died days after being placed in a face-down restraint by school staff at Guiding Hands School (behavioral management and psychological services provided) on Nov. 28, 2018.[19] The incident sparked an investigation by the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office and California Department of Education (CDE).[20] An inspection report from the CDE found sufficient evidence that Guiding Hands staff restrained Benson "for longer than was necessary" and used more than reasonable force.[21] Guiding Hands permanently closed its doors in January 2019, after a judge upheld the state's revocation of its certification.[22]

- A mother took her 11-year-old son to a UHS behavioral facility that detained her son without her consent. As WFAA News detailed: **"[T]he door locks behind you. You're told you can't leave. Stripped of your clothes, given a new bed. You have no idea when you'll see your family again."** The facility billed the boy's mother's insurance company more than $11,000 for the unwanted stay.[23]

- **2018:** A 15-year old boy died after being restrained at North Spring Behavioral Healthcare in North Virginia, owned by UHS.[24]

- **2017:** Jeremiah Flemming, an African American 15-year-old, died after a mental health technician physically restrained him at North Spring Behavioral Healthcare in Leesburg, North Virginia. His mother, Kinnisha Flemming, told *The Washington Post*, her son "didn't deserve the way he died." The state medical examiner concluded the teen died of asphyxiation. Jeremiah had been bullied and had become agitated and started punching the walls before he was restrained during the incident. About two minutes into the hold, a nurse observed that Jeremiah dropped his head down and sounded like he was snoring. The boy was later found unresponsive and not breathing. He was taken to a local hospital where he died. In 2018, an employee who had been charged with involuntary manslaughter over Jeremiah's death, was acquitted, raising concerns about more psychiatric restraint deaths being excused as "accidental killings.[25]

- **2017:** The mother of an 11-year-old girl treated at UHS's Shadow Mountain psychiatric hospital filed a lawsuit, alleging negligence, assault and battery and intentional infliction of emotional distress. The child was frequently seen with large bruises and welts during her stay, the lawsuit alleged.[26]

- **2017:** Internal surveillance videos and interviews with patients and staff revealed "a culture of violence" at UHS' Hill Crest hospital in Alabama. Videos showed staff members choking, dragging, and endangering adolescent patients.[27]

- **2017:** A teenage girl who was voluntarily admitted to UHS's Mayhill Hospital in Denton, Texas but then refused permission to leave the next day, even with her parents' permission. The teen was threatened with a 24-hour hold (involuntary commitment) in solitary confinement. The parents organized a rescue of their daughter and were physically tackled by staff trying to prevent it.[28]

- **2017:** A 12-year-old gained access to the medication chart in UHS's Shadow Mountain behavioral hospital and swallowed powerful antipsychotic drugs.[29]

- **2017:** A 13-year-old girl was raped at UHS's Timberlawn behavioral hospital in Texas.[30] The girl's father told the *Dallas Morning News,* "This can't happen to anyone else. The place needs to be shut down."[31]

- **2016:** A six-year-old boy, after having thrown a tantrum, was removed from school by police and taken to River Point psychiatric hospital in Florida, owned by a large for-profit behavioral facility operator, Universal Health Services.[32] He was locked in a "seclusion" room at 3 a.m. and waited more than 24 hours to see a doctor. "It felt like my child had been kidnapped," his mother said. The boy was released only after a lawyer intervened on his behalf. Nicholas's records showed that his parents asked at least three times to take him home, to no avail.[33]

- **2016:** On Nov. 20, Austin Skidmore, 19, died during an incident with staff at Laurel Heights Hospital owned by Universal Health Services. The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) determined that the facility used a manual hold "in a manner that would potentially impair the patient's ability to breathe resulting in the death of the patient." DCH reviewed video of the incident between Austin and the staff. At 12:11 p.m., Austin was struggling with a staff member outside his room. A minute later, a staff member straddled Austin, sitting on his midsection. Five minutes later, another staff member sat on Austin's back. He was face-down, struggling while his arms were held above his head. At 12:20 p.m., the staff member got off Austin's back and flipped him over. He appeared to be unconscious. 911 was called. The caller declined CPR instructions, saying they only needed an ambulance. By the time the ambulance arrived, it was too late. Austin choked on his own vomit but the medical examiner also classified the crime a homicide. No charges were filed. Austin's parents are suing Laurel Heights for wrongful death.[34]

- **2015:** UHS's Rock River Academy & Residential Center in Illinois, for treatment of adolescent girls with emotional problems, came under scrutiny when Rockford Police Department fielded more than 700 reports "concerning victimization of girls...including rape, aggravated battery and sodomy."[35] One teen's attorney noted, "Once we started digging into it, we just saw how bad their history is over there."[36] A lawsuit on behalf of five plaintiffs was filed at Cook County Court, Illinois against Rock River alleging sexual abuse and rape by staff. One girl said staff "intentionally administered psychotropic drugs which they used to keep her in a semi-conscious state so that she could be more easily manipulated and sexually abused." All five were minors at the time of being in Rock River. [37]It closed in 2015.

- **2014:** Bruce Maxwell, an attorney who filed lawsuits over the abuse of emotionally disturbed and autistic deaf children at UHS's National Dead Academy (NDA), a psychiatric facility for the deaf in Florida, said: "My hope is that the NDA is shut down... This kind of conduct should not be tolerated."[38] NDA closed in 2016.

- **2014:** The mother of a 17-year-old boy filed a suit against UHS's NDA facility for wrongful death and abuse and neglect of a child.[39]

- **2014:** A *Houston Chronicle* investigation in 2014 found restraint deaths in Shiloh Residential Treatment Center in Houston, Texas.[40] In its sister facility, Daystar Residential Center, between 1993 and 2002, three children died of asphyxiation from restraint procedures. A fourth death, 16-year-old Michael Keith Owens, due to asphyxiation, occurred in November 2010.[41] The teen was physically restrained in a bedroom closet after he had refused to show a staff member what he was holding in his hand, which turned out to be merely the cap of a pen.[42] In two of the deaths, homicide was ruled.[43] Daystar was found criminally negligent in one of the deaths and eventually closed down.[44]

- **2013:** A youth passed out due to possible head trauma following a restraint at

Clarinda the day before. The child required emergency hospitalization. The staffer who performed the restraint was placed on Iowa's Central Abuse Registry for "founded" allegations of physical abuse.[45]

- **2013:** Fantasia Franklin, 21, a permanent resident of the Pee Dee Regional Center in Florence, South Carolina, was held down and restrained in a Posey blanket (Posey is a restraint manufacturer). She lost consciousness and died five days later at the McLeod Regional Medical Center.[46] Her death was ruled a homicide due to asphyxiation.[47] A lawsuit against the SC Department of Disabilities and Special Needs and the Pee Dee Regional Center for the wrongful death was settled in 2016 for $1 million to Franklin's estate.[48]

- Reports by the California Department of Social Services who sent children to **Clarinda** revealed instances in which students were injured during physical restraints. As far back as 2012, a resident's collarbone was broken by an unapproved physical restraint technique. Staff involved in the incident were found to have participated in a cover up of the wrongdoing.[49]

- **2013:** An employee at a UHS Pensacola, Florida, behavioral facility was sentenced to jail after she was caught on camera slamming a young girl into a wall and then sitting on her for 20 minutes.[50]

- **2012-13:** UHS's Milton Girls' Juvenile Residential facility in Floridacame under scrutiny, when the facility's supervisor was charged and convicted of felony child abuse, involving a 15-year-old girl she brutally attacked.[52] Surveillance videos showed her appearing to slam the teen into a cement wall, throw her to the ground, and then pinned her down for 20 minutes. The video "seriously contradicts its description to us by officials representing the facility," said Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Secretary Wansley Walters in a statement. "Facilities being monitored is a systemic problem," said David Utter, an attorney with the Southern Poverty Law Center.[53] Then followed a mental health technician who was charged, convicted and jailed for 25 years for the sexual abuse of residents.[54]

- **2011:** A 6-year-old boy was physically restrained at UHS's Millwood psychiatric hospital in Texas, while placed in seclusion, fell face down and sustained a nasal fracture.[55]

- **2010:** Alexis Evette Richie, a 16-year-old foster care child was grabbed by two aides at the SSM DePaul Health (psychiatric) Center, taken to a "quiet" room where she was held face down in a chair, while a nurse injected her with a sedative into her hip. Alexis continued to struggle and then went limp. The nurse and the two aides left without checking her pulse or making sure she was breathing. It was 12 minutes after she stopped moving before anyone tried to revive Alexis. By then it was too late. The medical examiner concluded that Alexis had suffocated on the bean bag chair. Her death on Oct. 26 was ruled a homicide. No criminal charges were laid.[56]

- **2007:** 17-year-old, Omega Leach, died in a UHS-owned CHAD Youth Enhancement Center in Tennessee after staff pushed him face-down to the floor, apparently cutting off his air, investigators said.[57] According to an autopsy, the youth had "multiple superficial blunt force injuries" to his body as well as injuries to his neck muscles. He also sustained scrapes and bruises to both shoulders as well as a bruise under his left eye. Omega Leach's family subsequently sued UHS. In 2010, UHS settled with the family for $10.5 million.[58]

- **2006:** A boy was sent to an emergency room for cuts sustained in a restraint at UHS's CHAD youth center. In another case, staff broke the left arm of a 16-

year-old boy during a restraint. Later that year, CHAD told regulators another teenage resident was "taken to the floor" in a restraint that required four stitches for cuts on the lips. In May, Edith Ruland pulled her son, Dennis, 10, out of CHAD after she found numerous bruises on him, which the boy said staff had inflicted in a restraint hold.[59]

- **2005:** A Philadelphia child-care investigator learned that a staff member of UHS's CHAD youth center had been fired after he allegedly slammed a boy to the floor so hard the child fouled himself.[60] In September,14-year-old Linda Harris, an African American girl, collapsed at the CHAD center and died of a heart attack while being escorted to a "time-out" room. She died of heart failure.[61]

- **2001:** Tanner Wilson, 11, died in February from a heart attack while being physically restrained at the Gerard of Iowa psychiatric facility. An autopsy revealed the 11-year-old boy died of asphyxiation-suffocated to death-and ruled his death a homicide.[62] A staff member was charged with child endangerment but in August 2002, the case was dismissed essentially because of contrary medical opinion, with one doctor who said the death was "accidental."[63]

- **2000:** Nine-year-old Randy Steele also died from restraint at Laurel Ridge. He didn't feel like taking a bath in the psychiatric facility to which he had been admitted. In the scuffle that ensued, Randy vomited and then stopped breathing, while staff forcibly restrained him. After being revived, Randy was quickly transferred to another hospital where he died the next day. Hospital records later showed that Randy had been restrained 25 times in the 28 days prior to his death. Despite the evidence of blood discharging from his nose, mouth, eyes and anus, and bruises on his face and abdomen, no criminal charges were filed. At state legislative hearings, Randy's mother, Holly, held up her son's autopsy photos, pleading: "I hope that no other child has to die like this."[64]

- **1998:** Eleven-year-old Andrew McClain died of traumatic asphyxia (suffocation) and chest compression four days after being admitted to a Connecticut psychiatric facility. Andrew had disobeyed an instruction from a psychiatric aide to move to another table at breakfast. Two staff members subsequently restrained him, one by lying on top of him in a padded seclusion room.[65]

- **1997:** 16-year-old African American girl, Roshelle Clayborne, a ward of the state, while at the Laurel Ridge psychiatric treatment center in Texas, was slammed face-down on the floor in a restraint hold. "I can't breathe," she pleaded. She became suddenly still, blood trickled from the corner of her mouth as she lost control of her bodily functions. Her limp body was rolled into a blanket and dumped in a seclusion room. No one watched her die, the *Hartford Courant* reported.[66]

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