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P. O. Box 303
Delmar, Delaware 19940
March 14, 1978

Mr. Frank Nelson, Director
Drug Abuse Program
1309 Winewood Blvd., Bldg. 6
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

RE: STRAIGHT, INC.

Dear Mr. Nelson:

I was given your name and address by NADA and tried to reach you by phone last week; however, you were in Cincinnati and I spoke briefly with an assistant, Mr. Dave Schmalling. Mr. Schmalling was very courteous and helpful by giving me the name of Mr. James Holley; in fact, he had Mr. Holley return my call regarding my concern for two of my nieces that are presently incarcerated in the Straight drug rehabilitation program. Although Mr. Holley was very polite and offered to help; plus the fact he has met a very good friend of mine, Max Weisman, (Dr. Weisman is the Director of the Division of Alcoholism Control in the State of Maryland), I was not impressed. Mr. Holley read me the interview he had with in which she stated she now wants to remain in the program. My "womanly intuition" tells me he is more politically involved with Straight than he would like known.

Immediately, when being informed that my two nieces had been entered into the program, I requested all news clippings of articles pertaining to Straight be forwarded me by the St. Petersburg Times so that I might obtain information regarding the program, director, staff, etc.

After reading and re-reading these articles, the impression obtained was that this program sounds comparable with a World War II concentration camp where prisoners were brainwashed; or the Moonie group. It would appear that the majority of clients are from homes where the parents are unable to cope with their offspring, and possibly just want to shove them off on someone else, hoping for some miraculous changes in their children. There will undoubtedly be changes - many of them will be so brainwashed they will NEVER function as normal, secure, responsible individuals. Perhaps this program serves as an immediate respite for the parents, but when treating adolescents, one must keep some thought toward the future. Many of them will probably be released into society and have an extreme reversal of their "good" behavior; thus causing a schizophrenic personality which could result in even higher crime rates. These adolescents may never again smoke pot or drink alcohol; BUT, the crimes they might commit could be as severe as the treatment methods they are now receiving at Straight. It is quite apparent that there are no psychiatrists or professionals in the medical or mental health field on the staff. A degree in psychology does not qualify a person to manage an already "mixed-up" teen-ager's mind.

I have investigated through neighbors, friends, and even the girls' mother and found that neither of the girls had a drug abuse problem. Mr. Holley confirmed this by stating was NOT a "hard drug abuser - a little pot and she drank beer occasionally". The mother told me she entered the girls into the program because they had an "attitude problem".

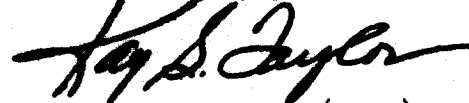
Just three weeks after _____ tried unsuccessfully to escape for the second time, her older sister, _____, was allowed to visit her in the presence of Mr. James Hartz, Director, and their mother. A visit which was also tape-recorded. _____ reports this was a very depressing visit and that _____ was not the sister she had known previously - that she seemed to be "totally programmed, brainwashed, etc." She stated _____ no longer wants to leave Straight. She claims she is happy there, loves everybody, etc. Apparently her last attempt to escape was her "breaking point" and she was no longer able to resist her "counselors". The mother advised the girls' father that the younger sister, _____ (15-years-old), had been more resistive to the counseling therapy; therefore, has spent considerable time in "solitary". However, if _____ has "earned talking privileges", he MIGHT be allowed to speak with her if he came to Florida.

We are fearful extensive psychiatric counseling will be necessary for both girls upon their release. This seems a rather stiff price to pay for something that actually started in the home environment.

In the event you are unaware of the treatment modalities offered at Straight, it is suggested a thorough investigation be conducted. Having worked closely with the State of Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene toward establishing an alcoholism counseling program; and with the State of Delaware toward the establishment of a Halfway House for Women, I am familiar with the manner in which most of the drug abuse programs are managed. The most surprising fact is the complete lack of professional services offered at Straight. It is inconceivable that 16, 17, 18-year-old ex-addicts with no education in either individual or group therapy, be allowed to "brainwash and physically abuse" other teen-agers. This type of therapy - reality or behavioral - is ALWAYS used only by the most competent and highly trained professionals. Sometimes even then, it can be extremely dangerous.

It is sincerely hoped you will revoke the license of Straight, cease funding, or whatever means you have at your disposal to see that this program stops it's operation. I have spoken with Ms. Backus, personal secretary to Jos. Califano; NADA, and many others regarding this program. Ms. Backus assured me she would forward the information on through the proper channels, etc. Also, letters and copies of the articles published in the St. Petersburg Times regarding Straight are being sent to various officials, etc., throughout the State of Florida, as well as to the news media. Hopefully, we will be successful in our attempts to have this program and its staff dismissed and the funds used for a more humane drug abuse program.

Very truly yours,



May S. Taylor (Mrs.)