



J. H. BELL, M. D.  
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE COLONY  
FOR EPILEPTICS AND FEEBLE-MINDED  
COLONY P. O., NEAR LYNCHBURG, VA.

January 22, 1926.

Hon. S. L. Ferguson,  
Senate Chamber,  
Richmond, Va.

My dear Senator Ferguson:

The State Board of Public Welfare, the General Board of State Hospitals and the Superintendents thereof are backing a proposition to make some arrangements for the care of idiots.

It has been estimated that there is one idiot in every 2,500 population, or about a thousand in the State. Of all mental defectives he is, of course, the most hopeless and the most pitiable, and under our present laws there is no place to which they can go <sup>except</sup> to the almshouse. Neither can we take him on the wards with other higher mental grades or epileptics, even did the law permit it, on account of the fact that he is so filthy, unclean, and such a disturbing factor that it would be an imposition on other patients.

It has been estimated that for every five idiots institutionalized, four people are released from caring for them to some form of productive occupation. It therefore would appear to be an economic measure for the State to provide some place to care for this most pitiable creature, the lowest order of human beings.

The present plan as briefly outlined would contemplate the erection of suitable quarters at the State Colony. There being approximately a thousand in the State, it would be useless to begin this work without equipping ourselves to care for at least two hundred on the start. The cost of this, based on our last building done here, would be in the neighborhood of \$100,000 and would require the erection of two separate buildings, one for males and one for females, of one hundred bed capacity each, and we would be able to take care of the most needy cases at this time.

The idiot fortunately does not reproduce himself, but is ordinarily the byproduct of some defective parental strain, and is frequently the result of syphilis or alcoholic intoxication in parents at the time of conception. I, of course, realize that were this proposition to work out successfully, that the State would be assuming an additional burden, but there does not seem to me any reasonable argument why discrimination should be made between this and other

#2 - Hon. S. L. Ferguson.

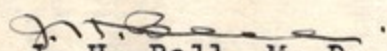
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forms of mental defectives whom we now care for. In the almshouses it costs about \$350.00 per capita to care for their patients. In the State hospitals it costs around \$190 to \$200, the money in both instances coming out of the pocket of the tax payers, and for that reason it would ultimately seem to be an economical way of caring for them.

Forewarned is forearmed, and I am therefore writing you to give you this preliminary information relative to the matter which will be brought up a little later.

With kindest regards,

Very truly yours,

  
J. H. Bell, M. D.,  
Superintendent.

JHB:F