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**West Virginia Mental
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Press Release

Disability Advocacy Groups come together to protest new name for Weston Hospital

Renaming the hospital "Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum" promotes stigma, and discrimination against people with psychiatric disabilities.

Charleston, WV March 14, 2008: Disability advocates in West Virginia have joined the West Virginia Mental Health Consumers' Association (WVMHCA) in opposing the renaming of the Weston Hospital in Weston, WV the "Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum". In a letter to the owner of the hospital, the Interim Executive Director of WVMHCA, Debbie Toler stated, "To name the property "Trans-Allegheny Lunatic Asylum" ...is discriminatory and promotes stigma and misunderstanding of mental illness". Mrs. Toler also states in the letter, "Stigma and discrimination run rampant in our communities preventing people with disabilities from acquiring homes, jobs, which also create barriers from achieving a successful, satisfying life in the community. Individuals who spent their lives in the hospital were receiving treatment for mental illness. As a consumer of mental health services and an advocate I am personally offended by the term "Lunatic Asylum". Several disability groups joined WVMHCA in supporting removing the stigmatizing title from the National Historic Landmark. Groups signing in support included the Fair Shake Network, the West Virginia Mental Health Planning Council, the WV Statewide Independent Living Council, and the WV Americans with Disabilities Act Coalition, the Mountain State Direct Action Center, and Valley Healthcare System.

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