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By Fax (2882 0099)
14 May 2008

Mr Henry TANG, GBS, JP
The Chief Secretary for Administration
12/F, Central Government Offices
West Wing
Lower Albert Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mr TANG,

Panel on Welfare Services

Licensing scheme for residential care homes for persons with disabilities

I am writing to request the Administration to expedite the introduction of a licensing scheme to regulate the operation of residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs).

At its meeting on 8 May 2008, the Panel on Welfare Services was updated on the Administration's plan to introduce a Residential Care Homes (Persons with Disabilities) Bill to the Legislative Council in the 2008-2009 session and the progress of the Voluntary Registration Scheme (VRS) for private RCHDs as an interim measure to encourage private RCHD operators to enhance their service quality. Members consider that the introduction of a licensing scheme for RCHDs has been long overdue and strongly urge the Administration to speed up the legislative timetable for the licensing regime.

The Panel also notes that of 40 private RCHDs known to the Social Welfare Department, 26 have applied to join VRS, but only six of them have met the VRS requirements. The remaining 14 private RCHDs have not yet applied to join the scheme for various reasons, such as non-compliance with the VRS requirements. Members have raised concerns about the quality of services in private RCHDs. Given that the implementation of VRS is far from satisfactory, members take the view that, pending the introduction of the licensing scheme for RCHDs, the Administration should allocate more resources for stepping up the monitoring and inspection of private RCHDs and make necessary arrangements for those residents who are currently living in

private RCHDs which may not be able to meet the licensing requirements. In addition, the Administration should set up a steering committee comprising representatives from the relevant stakeholders to foster the preparatory work required for the licensing regime.

The Panel has instructed me to convey the requests to you. Members hope you would give personal attention to the matters and the Administration would provide a response to the Panel's requests by the end of June 2008.

(Fernando CHEUNG)
Chairman to Panel