



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE  
WASHINGTON

MAR 26 1964

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

March 24, 1964

Dr. Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics  
Stanford University School of Medicine  
Stanford Medical Center  
300 Pasteur Drive  
Palo Alto, California

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

Your recent letter to Mr. Luther W. Stringham has been forwarded to this office for reply. Mr. Stringham left the Department in November 1963 to assume the position of Executive Director of the National Association for Retarded Children.

We have had a number of request for information regarding the 3% figure used by the President's Panel on Mental Retardation to estimate the number of mentally retarded in the United States. The National Institute of Mental Health has provided the following material related to this inquiry:

"The estimated 3% of the population, numbering at that time (1962) about 5 million, was taken from the joint efforts of the members of the Committee on Mental Deficiency of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. These figures have been rather generally accepted by our colleagues in the field as reasonably accurate.

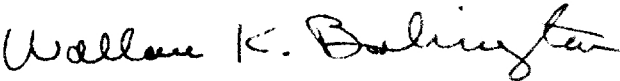
Dr. Clemens E. Benda cites these and other figures at considerable length in his paper entitled "Clinicopathological Considerations of Mental Deficiency, Based on an Analysis of 400 Autopsies" on page 33 of Proceedings of the Conference on Research and Training in the Field of Mental Retardation held at The Lynchburg Training School and Hospital, Colony, Virginia on September 11-12, 1958. Using these figures, Dr. Benda in the same booklet describes in Table I a breakdown of the percentages and approximate numbers of mildly, moderately, and severely retarded. A copy of this Table is enclosed."

STRINGHAM, L.W.

We recognize that additional studies need to be made in this area. The Department currently has a number of proposals under consideration that will throw light on this subject.

I hope this will be of some help to you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wallace K. Babington".

Wallace K. Babington  
Executive Vice Chairman  
Secretary's Committee on  
Mental Retardation

Enclosure