Ohio Senate Finance Committee

June 11, 2015

Testimony of William J. Weldon and Susan L. Weldon, parents of a Developmentally Disabled Worker

Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chair Coley, Ranking Minority Member Skindell and Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to emphasize today the importance of the Bill of Rights for the Developmentally Disabled. This vulnerable segment of our population often does not have advocates to express their opinions when their jobs, their care and their financial security are endangered by the necessity of balancing State and Federal budgets. We understand that the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services is proceeding with a 20% reduction in Medicaid and Social Security Disability Insurance. As individuals, we are contacting our U.S. Representatives and Senators, but support from our State officials (such as the Resolution co-sponsored by Representive Romanchuk and Representative Antonio) will certainly help emphasize our concerns.

We were encouraged last week to receive a letter from Zach Haughawout, Deputy Director of Legislative Affairs and Communcation at the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. He was responding to our letter sent originally to Governor Kasich and Lt. Governor Taylor, asking for their involvement in representing our concerns to CMS and the Department of Justice concerning the possible reduction in services to the Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled. Mr. Haughawout assured us that over the next several years, DODD will do on-site visits to determine if there are settings that do not meet CMS guidelines for “community participation.” This relates directly to the Bill of Rights section M that refers to the right to “choose the settings in which they wish to work...whether in disability-specific facility-based workshops...or in community settings.” While we believe that TAC Enterprises in Clark County represents one of the best of employers available for the I/DD, the issue of “community participation.” reminds us of the insistence of agencies such as Employment First and Disability Rights Ohio who want all of our special children working at jobs in **their** definition of “community. In the two years since the inception of the Employment First initiative, they interviewed 57 individuals at TAC. This resulted in 6 job tryouts and 4 people found jobs in the community. All

supplement those jobs with services provided by TAC. We see this as evidence that the job market for the I/DD is not viable at this time. In the future we see organizations such as Project Search as the preferred way to gradually and effectively introduce individuals to employment through training that starts in Middle School and continues with internships that lead to employment after graduation.
TAC Enterprises is a viable employer now with about $4.8 million in local business and Federal contracts. TAC is the sole source contractor for the manufacture and repair of cargo nets for the United States Air Force. Employees also make computer and electronic cabinetry, create ornamental garden stones, run a hydroponic garden that sells produce to Springfield schools and local restaurants. Our son, David, assembles subcomponents used in automobile seats. David has cerebral palsy and lacks fine motor skills, but he, on average, completes 100 of these devices per day. My wife and I have yet to be able to assemble even one of these devices.

TAC also provides opportunities for advancing social and artistic skills as mentioned in section P of the Bill of Rights. There are cooking classes, art classes, computer classes, and most important of all for our son, the TAC choir. This group has performed at nursing homes, charity events, community festivals, the annual Ohio Music Educators Organization convention and has even performed in this very Statehouse.

One issue that is not specifically addressed in the Bill of Rights is the transportation that is essential to take the I/DD from their home to their place of employment, then return them to their home. If at some point in the future there is a huge increase in community employment for the I/DD, the transportation costs would dramatically increase to take workers with different work schedules to various employers in many locations. More vehicles would need to be purchased, many of which would need to be wheelchair-accessible.

We know from four previous testimonies before House and Senate committees that there is tremendous support for the I/DD agenda as presented by parents, by aids and by those individuals who **could** express their needs. Our son was with us at all previous testimonies, but he is at his annual vacation at Camp Allyn, a wonderful service sponsored in part by the Rotary Club. Since David is now over 18, his attendance at camp is paid for by his Level One Medicaid Waiver. This is another example of why it is so important that our concerns are expressed to the Federal Government regarding reduction in Medicaid funding.

We know the budget process is complicated and challenging, especially for you as the decision-makers. We urge you to consider our thoughts as the proposals for sheltered workshops, care centers and care providers move through the last steps of the legislative process. For many years Right to Life issues have been given much attention. We're asking that Respect for Life be the driving force to protect the rights of our son and all others whose voices need to be heard.

Thank you.