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March 13, 2015

To Whom it may concern,

For 20 years, I have worked with mentally impaired and developmentally disabled adults. Fourteen and a half of those years have been spent at Youngstown Developmental Center.

The Governor of Ohio and the Director of Developmental Disabilities have chosen to close Youngstown and Montgomery Developmental Centers by June of 2017. This decision was made without regarding the wishes of their families and guardians.

The individuals who reside in those Centers have profound disabilities, and many have serious medical issues. They require close supervision, structure, and continuity. Many have adverse reactions to change; even something as simple as rearranging furniture.

There are a lot of folks who have called YDC and MDC "home" for well over 20 years and they have a rapport with the staff who care for them. They need the services that can only be offered at these facilities. To remove them from their home and familiar staff would be detrimental to their health and safety.

Not only am I concerned for the safety of the people I serve, but I'm fearful for the well being of my family should I lose my job at YDC. I have been the sole breadwinner for over two years. My husband has been fighting to receive Social Security Disability benefits for work related injuries he sustained 19 years ago. He cannot maintain employment long enough to support our family.

I, myself, have been diagnosed with Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease, which robs me of the muscles in my hands, arms, legs, and feet. I will eventually require a wheelchair. This, along with the degenerative joint disease I suffer from, makes it increasingly difficult for me to find other employment with a sustainable income.

I'm especially fearful for the future of my 12 year old son. He is showing the familiar signs and is currently being tested for the inherited Charcot-Marie-Tooth Disease. He also has other medical issues which require maintenance drugs.

If I lose my job, I will lose everything. Not only will I lose my home, but I will no longer have health, dental, vision, or prescription coverage and no means to pay for it. My husband will lose his appeal for disability benefits as I won't be able to afford his continuing treatment or medicine without insurance.

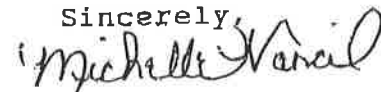
Transferring to another facility is not an option. We have one car and traveling 56 miles to the nearest Developmental Center would leave my husband and son without transportation.

There is so much at stake when a facility closes. It not only affects the lives of those who live and work there; but the economy too. Our consumers enjoy going out to local restaurants, movies, sporting events; and a lot of money is spent at businesses such as J.C. Penney, Target, K-Mart and Kohl's. Our consumers visit doctors in the community also. In my case, more than likely, I will lose my retirement as I will have to cash it in to live off of; if only for a little while. I will not be able to afford to spend money at local businesses or doctors either.

What will happen to sheltered workshops as our consumers are moved to other counties? The ripple effect is endless!

There has to be another way to solve budget issues and spare the Developmental Centers.

Sincerely,



Michelle Vancil  
Therapeutic Program Worker  
Youngstown Developmental Center

Roseanne Colson  
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March 16. 2015

To Whom it may concern,

I am not in agreement with Governor Kasich and Ohio DoDD since they made the decision to close Youngstown and Montgomery Developmental Centers by June 2017. They say they want people with disabilities to have choices. If this is the case, why are they taking YDC and MDC out of the "pool" as options? Hundreds of individuals with profound disabilities have lived in DCs for many years. These most vulnerable and their parents and guardians have chosen DCs because of the quality services and low staff turnover. I have worked at YDC for 16½ years. There are many employees at YDC like me who are like family to those we serve!

Anyone who says that specialized settings like YDC and sheltered workshops are segregated and less valuable than other settings in the community has never worked with the profoundly disabled who not only have chronic medical needs, but also need structure, security and continuity.

Closing DCs puts residents at risk. The care given to people should be our first priority, but the state officials who made the decision to close YDC and MDC claim that tax dollars will be saved. My argument is that more money will be spent in the long run to address medical and emotional problems of disabled individuals in turmoil over being uprooted from the only homes they've ever known for years.

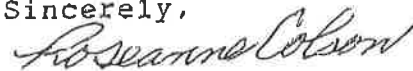
Personally, I may need to travel 54 miles to the nearest DC. Moving the residents out of the current community where they live (Youngstown or Montgomery) will affect the economy there. Since both myself and the disabled individuals I have had the privilege to care for are elsewhere, we will not be frequenting local businesses.

If I choose to go to another DC, I will probably be replacing someone who currently works there, but has less seniority. This will have an adverse effect on their situation as well.

The closures of Developmental Centers needs to be stopped! These closures are not good for anyone. It is most unfair to those who live and work there. It is also unfair to target certain DCs when they have had stellar reputations. YDC received a three-year license during its last review. Some places only get one or two year licenses. DoDD conducts this review. DCs are also reviewed annually by the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Medicaid. When an individual lives in a DC, they will always get proper medical, dietary and other needed care in order to complete activities of daily living. They also have the benefit of long-lasting meaningful relationships with each other, their families and guardians, staff at the DC and people in their community.

Don't allow our most vulnerable citizens to lose all this!

Sincerely,



Roseanne Colson  
Therapeutic Program Worker-YDC

I am writing this letter in the hopes that my voice and the voices of so many others will be heard regarding the closure of Youngstown Development Center (YDC). Both my husband and myself are Therapeutic Program Workers at YDC. My husband has been a very dedicated employee for the past 28 years. I have been a devoted employee for the past 6 years.

The closing of Youngstown Developmental Center will impact our lives tremendously. Not only financially, but emotionally. My husband and I have grown to love the consumers that we have cared for all of these years. We will be in jeopardy of losing our home. We have lived in the Mahoning Valley all of our lives, and would hate to have to relocate and leave behind our families and the life that we love here. We would no longer have any medical insurance or other health care benefits. My husband and I both have medical issues that require us to make regular visits to our doctors.

It sickens us to imagine what will become of our "consumers" when they are forced to leave their home and relocate to a place that is foreign to them and not have the staff that they see every day, some of them for the past 30 years. We ARE these consumers family! They look forward to seeing the staff that they have known and loved for so many years to walk through the door.

The staff at Youngstown Developmental Center are the most loving and caring people that I have personally have ever met in my lifetime. We absolutely LOVE what we do and we do it unselfishly! Closing Youngstown Developmental Center is the worse imaginable thing that could possibly happen to hundreds of people. Most and foremost, the people who live there and call it their home!

In the past years many of our consumers who left to go into a group home have either came back because they just couldn't adapt, ended up in the hospital for an extended amount of time, or even have died because of the care they were receiving. The care at Youngstown Developmental Center is the best care imaginable! We have 24/7 nursing, 27/7 direct care on grounds. At group homes the care isn't what our consumers require in their everyday life.

Closing Youngstown Developmental Center will eliminate over 272 jobs. Also in our community The Tamarkin Company is closing and relocation which over 200 people will be losing their jobs. And The C.A.A (privatized prison) is also not renewing their contract which means another 200+ people will be losing their jobs. This is going to hit our community severely!

In closing I want you to imagine that you have a loved one in a great facility like Youngstown Developmental Center, and that one day you got a phone call telling you that your loved one will have their life turned upside down and will be moved miles and miles away and that you had no say in the matter, and your loved one had no voice about this decision. Then you tell me....is this fair? Is this humane? Is this what you would want to happen to your son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother?

Thank you for your time. I just hope that my words will speak for those who have no voice.

Sincerely yours,

*April Mahaffey*

Hello my name is Erin Mook & I am currently a Therapeutic Program Worker at The Youngstown Developmental Center. I have many fears & objections to YDC closing as also i have a background in mental health as a Case Management in Columbiana, Mahoning & Trumbull counties. I have seen first hand what happens when vital community supports close such as the mental health hospitals. Throughout my 12 years in casemanagment & traveling the 3 county's I saw individuals with severe & persistent mental illness barely existing & with substandard care in their homes, apartments & group homes ! I observed group homes where 1 worker took care of 8-10 individuals crammed into tiny rooms! I heard numerous complaints from residents stating they where abused, and had medication and belongings stolen! Note these were patients with mental illness but were verbal & taken advantage of & we want to place our most vulnerable developmental delayed population, most that our non verbal, in these homes. I firmly believe that not all group homes are like this but without a doubt the quality of care at our state facilities are superior. For example the state facilities have many checks in place for quality of care for residents. These are good jobs with low turn over, unlike most group home jobs with low pay & high turn over. I worked at one of the State Psychiatric hospital, Heartland Behavioral Healthcare, where I was also a Therapeutic Program Worker. I have witnessed individuals be admitted, receive the proper medication, & thrive with programming & a structured day! Once discharged the same person goes off medication due to lack of resources & decompensates & is re hospitalized again & again. Some people with profound DD or Severe & Persistent Mental illness don't thrive or maintain well & the community isn't the least restrictive environment for them. I do believe in the freedom of choice & feel that most residents would continue to make Youngstown Developmental Center their home. I have worked at the Youngstown Developmental Center & have witness our residents run to their bus with excitement to attend provided workshop. I've seen non-verbal residents that have been admitted to YDC from group homes that have deteriorated due to the care they received & once in our care made huge improvements with their health & happiness . This isn't about saving my job, I will be fine! It's about doing what's right! If the Youngstown Developmental Center Closes it will be devastating to our residents. I firmly believe that the care provided to our residents is superior to any other options & should still remain a choice!  
Thank you for your time.

Erin Mook  
Therapeutic Program Worker  
Youngstown Developmental Center  
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