

Hello, My name is Nicole Scholten. I'm here to speak to you today about Independent Providers and the how they impact my life. My 11 year old daughter, Lucy, has had the same Independent Provider since she was 3. Why, because this person, Shannon Woodring, is an amazing individual who actually became an Independent Provider because of Lucy. We choose Shannon because she is the kind of professional that doesn't just take Lucy to therapies and appointments, but has responded to those experiences by paying close attention and putting innovative play and learning into practice. She believes in Lucy. My husband and I have often said that one of Lucy's biggest challenges lies within the sometimes limiting way others treat her, as Lucy is an incredibly physically challenged person. But Shannon doesn't look at Lucy with limits. Consider that while I still don't have basic yes, no communication from Lucy in the way that you likely think of it, I have often come home to find Lucy and Shannon listening to age appropriate science podcasts. She makes these things real for Lucy by providing her 'study materials' like a set of planets, a blow up space shuttle, and talking to her about what anti-gravity situations might mean for her body. I hope you consider those things to be amazing by themselves. But here's the really cool part of that story, Lucy plays with her space shuttle. She will do the very rare thing of reaching... to play with her shuttle. That is a story about quality. Improved quality of life and a high quality provider who deserves to be treated as a professional and paid the salary she can make independently, rather than through an agency, not simply a body filling the position of changing and feeding my daughter. I am certain that relationships like ours will be damaged by eliminating opportunities for Independent Providers within the system.

I certainly do not wish to appear unappreciative. Quite the contrary, I am greatly thankful for the services provided by Ohio Medicaid for my family. In the context of these services, I think about the phrase, 'Beggars can't be choosers.' And perhaps that's how some folks think about this. I truly hope that we can agree these services are provided as a response to communities of people taking care of each other in need where we should. Another phrase comes to mind, 'If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well.' Our state heralds the ability for a person to choose their provider. Lucy chooses Shannon. I believe our state needs to stand up for people like Lucy and Shannon.

You must recognize that the consideration of the requirement for a family like mine to take on the responsibility of 'employer' for IP's like Shannon, is the same thing as eliminating the opportunity completely. It is disingenuous to say anything else. So, I hope the state of Ohio makes a different decision.

1. Allow Independent Providers to remain as their own employer, the common practice in our nation of being an independent contractor.
2. Allow the voters of the state to consider the issue in the light of day.
3. Agree the state is more suited than medically challenged families to assume the roll of employer.
4. Work with the IRS and the ARC towards the goal of an amiable solution.

The fact that a parent of a profoundly physically challenged child has taken the time to travel from Cincinnati to speak on this issue today must be an indication of the gravity of the issue. For every person here today, representing a family like mine, there are 100's if not 1000's more at home because, though

they care and will be harmed by the proposed elimination of Independent Providers, they could not fathom how to get here. I personally know that some are just trying to make it through the day.

So I'm here today to speak for those families, in the hopes, the belief that if you fully understand the need and the success story of Lucy and Shannon, you will reconsider the proposed changes to this service.

Nicole Scholten

Co-director Ohio Families CANN

3841 Spring Grove Ave

Cincinnati, OH 45223

513-348-8923

chadlucynicole@yahoo.com