

Full Senate Finance Committee Testimony for H.B. 64 on May 14th, 2015

Good Morning.

My name is Judy Rammel. My husband and I are the parents of a 37 yr.old Down Syndrome daughter, Amy. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak for our daughter and all the Developmentally Disabled who cannot speak for themselves.

I would like to start with a quote from President Abraham Lincoln, which hangs on the wall of this statehouse: "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent."

I am here to tell you Amy has never given her consent to be governed by any of you, even though she is capable of doing so. She chooses not to vote because of those around her who try to tell her how to vote. This is one of the reasons Amy finds it hard to trust so called "normal" people.

Let me give you a couple more reasons for this mistrust. Amy, has worked in the community three times. She was Isolated, wrongly accused of theft, and worked for 3 months without pay or guidance from management. Only then, did she start working at TAC which is a sheltered workshop. She has worked there for 15 years. TAC is a safe environment where Amy is challenged to try different jobs. At this time she assembles springs for the automotive industry and also works in the greenhouse which supplies salad greens for local restaurants. Most days she informs me of how many boxes of springs she finished or what she did in the greenhouse, such as harvesting the salad greens. She is emphatic that she does not want to try working in the community again.

I have been told by many around the state that TAC has a wonderful reputation as a sheltered

workshop. I have also been told by some, even by one of my grandsons who has worked at a sheltered workshop in another county, that, that workshop is nothing like TAC. He is so grateful that his aunt Amy is very fortunate to have such a place to work. So instead of closing TAC as we know it now, why can't we work together to use TAC as a template for other workshops?

One of the things that has upset me about this whole process is that many of we parents/guardians were not contacted for their input. Nor was our daughter. Yes, there are those with disabilities that want to and should work in the community. Every year Amy is asked if she would like to pursue a job in the community. She doesn't hesitate to say "no". Shouldn't she have the same right to choose where she works also?

Again, I thank you for listening with compassion and caring. I have two questions for you to consider: first of all, what is the best way to grab the attention of the federal politicians? I have already written to Ohio's politicians in Washington and have been either ignored, sent a form letter, or sent a reply which stated, and I quote: "Enhanced community integration is a worthy goal that respects the desires and preferences of people with disabilities." This is certainly true for some but not all. So do we make them aware of us and those we represent by renting a bus, going to Washington and carry signs in front of congress, the senate, and the White House? Any suggestions you might have would be greatly appreciated.

My second question is: Why does it seem that the most vulnerable in our society are the ones we cut funding for? The message seems to be that only the rich and powerful deserve to be heard. We live in a disposable society and I am sorry to say I think that includes human beings. Amy was born with the right to live. With this present legislation she is being told she only has the right to exist.

All that I am asking is that Amy and others in her situation be given a choice! For me that is the

bottom line. Their right to CHOICE!

Respectfully,

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