

Senate Medicaid Committee

May 19, 2015

Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 64

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Cafaro, and Members of the Senate Medicaid Committee. Thank you for allowing me to offer testimony on House Bill 64, the main operating budget, and more specifically Section 5123.032, which establishes a review board to assess the closure of 2 Ohio developmental centers. This section of the budget could potentially keep the door of Youngstown Developmental Center open.

My name is Kelly Marenkovic and I began my career as an R.N. at YDC 19 years ago. With a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology, as well as my BSN in nursing, I had found the perfect job for me. I was able to develop my nursing skills and also be a part of the team that addresses some of the most complex neurological, developmental, and behavioral issues of, what is considered, the department of MRDD.

What I learned very quickly is that all the textbooks in the world won't prepare you for what is required to get many of our clients through their daily routine. It is the consistency of direct care staff and the relationships that they build with our clients that provides them with the support they need to get them out the door each morning. And yes, I said, out the door like a normal productive Ohio citizen. Most, except the medically fragile, go somewhere Monday through Friday. Whether it be, on grounds or out in community workshops. I have seen those high functioning clients come into the Food Bank where I volunteer on Friday mornings from some county workshops, and I am here to tell you, that is NOT the same population that I work with here at YDC. Each day can present new challenges, from the seizure client that refuses her meds that may require hours of coaxing, to the behaviorally unstable client who has just flipped a table because he didn't get the breakfast he wanted.

I know that you have heard much testimony about our more medically fragile, however I work primarily in the advanced unit where I have similar concerns about the safety net that many of our "frequent flyer" clients will be losing. So who are our frequent flyers? Let me start with one of my favorites. He first arrived to our center, wearing a pair of my husband's handcuffs from the

Mahoning County Sherriff's Department. Now there was some exciting dinner conversation at my house that night! He had served several months in Jail for arson. And much of what had taken place in jail was not at all appropriate for an individual with an MR diagnosis. In their defense, he was unmanageable and they had few resources. He soon became one of my least favorite clients. Why you ask? Because he could fake a seizure and feign unconsciousness like nothing I had seen before. He actually managed to get himself admitted to one of our local hospital intensive care units upon feigning such an episode rather than end his family home visit. I felt a sense of redemption in the fact that if he could fool them, then maybe I was correct in my assumption that his behaviors were mostly attention seeking. Once the interdisciplinary team of the psychology department and staff advisors coordinated a plan to improve on his coping techniques then eventually he was able to be placed back out into a community group home after 2 years in our facility.

He returned briefly approximately 2 years later, and then once more back to our center just under 4 years later. This last time that he returned, was the day before Thanksgiving. I guess they didn't want to deal with him over the holidays. He arrived late in the afternoon, disheveled and glassy eyed. His provider did not give a second thought to the fact that they had brought him here without any of his daily meds and his physician orders were a mess to figure out (the incompetence of the nursing staff was glaring at me). It was a mad dash to get orders written correctly so that I would receive his meds for that evening. After settling back into his familiar home on our campus, he requested to have a word with me. His request were simple 1)can I get a haircut? 2)will I get to see the dentist again here? 3)will I be able to get my glasses fixed?

So my question is, why hadn't these services been provided elsewhere, as was promised? Where does he turn to when his next string of behavioral outburst puts him at odds with his provider. When will he ever get to call a place home for more than a few years?

I do have hope, and I can buy into the belief that there are those in the high functioning category that can do well in our community group homes. My second case and point. A recent discharge of ours had been the victim of years of sexual abuse from an early age. She began her admission to YDC displaying many inappropriate behaviors to see what our reaction would be. Over time, her progress became evident with the help of almost daily sessions with our on grounds Psychology assistant, as well as a community based counselor which she

saw one to two times a week. All appeared to be going well until a potential date was announced for her to return to her previous provider. It was at that point that some of her original behaviors began to surface once more. I myself became the target of her anger because I was one of the people in her circle that she had come to trust, and it was I who also didn't seem to be coming to her defense in the efforts to send her back to where unwelcome experiences may have occurred. Fortunately our Psychology Assistant was able to intervene and connect her with our community resource coordinator to find her an alternative provider. Her behaviors deescalated shortly thereafter and she confided in me that her aggressive outburst was the result of her fear of returning to her previous provider.

So once again, will this have the fairytale ending that we would all like to see. The answer is unclear. She has called me at the center on two occasions and all appears well for the most part, however what do I tell her if or when she hits that rough patch in the road. Once again, her safety net has been expunged.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions that you have.