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Honorable Chair and Members of the Medicaid Committee

My name is Jeffrey Fox, and I am the father of a 33-year-old autistic young man named Matthew Fox who lives at Montgomery Developmental Center (MDC). Matthew is nonverbal himself but understands what other people say. He is very active. Prior to coming to MDC, Matthew lived at home and then later at a 3-bed group home. Although there were some positive things about the group home, these were more than offset by the shortcomings. At the group home Matthew was given a near-lethal overdose of Depakote that put him in the hospital, he had gastro-intestinal problems such as impacted bowels that also led to hospital stays, and he had several stays in hospital psych wards when group home staff were unable to follow his behavioral plan. Since coming to MDC in 2002, Matt has thrived and found a place he can truly call home. He has made friends, has activities, and is a part of the Huber Heights community. With the nursing care that MDC provides, he has not suffered the overdoses, bowel problems, or behavioral crises that characterized his period living in a group home.

My concern is that the state now plans to move forward with a downsizing plan that involves closing the excellent Montgomery Developmental Center facility BEFORE they have developed robust community homes in the Miami Valley area or the qualified staff that will be needed to operate them. In my view, a key component of such a home for individuals like Matthew will be real nurses (not direct care workers serving as "delegated nurses") to administer all prescription medications and check regularly for chronic conditions like impacted bowels. Also, I am troubled by the centers selected for closure. The officials at the Department of Developmental Disabilities in Columbus have chosen to close a small, modern community-based facility like MDC while leaving open larger more "institutional" developmental centers like the one in Columbus. I was told by Director Martin this is because the smaller more modern centers can be more easily sold. I find this logic crass and troubling.

Moreover, the previous biennium's round of developmental center downsizing is moving at a snail's pace in the Miami Valley. As of now, ground has just been broken for the two 6-bed intermediate care facilities promised in the 2013 budget. When completed, these will only provide housing for 12 of the 88 individuals who currently reside at Montgomery Developmental Center. What will become of the remaining 76 individuals and their families? Given the recent track record, my fear and expectation is that in the end, most residents at Montgomery Developmental Center will be herded into remaining centers in Batavia and Columbus, much further from home. This will greatly increase the drive times for parents and family to visit loved ones.

I ask you to take a hard look at the misguided crusade against developmental centers, intermediate care facilities, and sheltered workshops by so-called "advocacy groups" like Disability Rights Ohio. Montgomery Developmental Center and Youngstown Developmental Center ARE a vital part of the fabric of their communities, they provide the best and most appropriate care to the individuals they serve, and truly are HOME to their residents. Please don't destroy a critical resource it has taken Ohio years to build in the name of "de-institutionalization."

I urge the Senate Medicaid Committee to support amended House Bill 64, which creates a 13-member closure commission to review the proposed closings of Montgomery and Youngstown Developmental Centers. Hopefully the commission will have adequate time for public hearings and input from all directly impacted by the closures. Ultimately it will be the individuals and their families who will live with the results.

Thank you for the opportunity to make my voice heard. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.