

I am testifying in support of the Informed Choice Amendment.

Melissa is a 31-year-old young lady who was admitted to the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities on 11/2/1998. Per her most recent psychological evaluation, Melissa functions in the profound range of developmental disability. Melissa's long term conditions include profound intellectual and motor developmental disability due to infantile spasms, Lennox Gastaut syndrome, spastic quadriplegia, scoliosis, esophageal reflux, dysfunctional uterine bleeding, and left hip dislocation.

Melissa requires 24 hour auditory supervision with periodic visual checks (every 30 minutes minimum) while in her bedroom or living area. Melissa requires 2:1 supervision when bathing, due to her ability to sit up in the bath tub. She requires 1:1 supervision with all personal care.

In layman's terms, Melissa does not walk and does not talk. She requires assistance for everything. Caring for Melissa requires 24/7 supervision to accommodate her daily needs and monitor her health.

Our goals for Melissa include remaining as healthy, safe, as comfortable as possible, and (when possible) participate in activities at Hattie's and on community outings.

We feel that these goals are best met by remaining at Hattie's. We also feel that because the standards are not as stringent for group homes, the quality of care provided in a group home setting would not be appropriate for Melissa.

We cannot stress strongly enough how much the services provided by Hattie's, not to mention the outside services that come into the facility, improve life on a daily basis for Melissa. There are so many things she has access to at the Center – therapy, medical staff, the pool, adult day program, Creative Arts, religious services, social events, and more. Because of the time and transportation logistics involved, she would miss out on so many of these things if she were in a group home setting.

In addition, we have the distinct impression that the individuals in government who are making the decisions regarding the need for intermediate care facilities and the day-to-day operations of these facilities have no first-hand knowledge or experience as to what it actually takes to care for many of these individuals. They do not take into consideration that these individuals are not 'normal', so attempting to force a 'normal' life is not a good option.

Again (and again and again and again!), Intermediate Care Facilities like the Hattie Larlham Center for Children with Disabilities should be kept as a choice for individuals/families in Ohio!

Wayne E. Gross, Father
279 S. Portage Path
Akron, OH 44302
330-434-2560
wayne71753@yahoo.com