

May 11, 2021

Dear Sir:

My name is Joy Spencer, and I am writing to ask you not to accept the proposed amendment in the state budget that would create legislative oversight to Disability Rights Ohio, the state's Protection and Advocacy organization and Client Assistance Program for Ohioans with disabilities. This amendment could profoundly harm the rights of people with disabilities in Ohio.

The fact that its intent mirrors a battle that DRO already fought in the last biennial budget shamefully points to a waste of DRO's time – time which could be better put to use helping families in Ohio. Additionally, the proposed amendment would create a joint committee to examine DRO's operations, including whether a new entity should be designated as the state's protection and advocacy entity every two years. Again, not a time worthy battle to have to confront.

Disability Rights Ohio is a private nonprofit corporation that receives no state dollars. No other private advocacy or legal organization is subject to this type of review. In fact, DRO already reports to federal regulators each year. It was the intent of Congress when they created organizations like DRO nearly 40 years ago that they be free from unfair state pressure.

DRO helps elevate the voice of self-advocates and gives individuals and organizations a resource they need to be effective in their advocacy. They have personally helped me better represent my adult son with a disability when fighting for his rights. Empowered by their guidance (informing me of our legal rights and walking me through the options available), I was able to secure for him services through both our County Board of DD and Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities which were conveniently being "overlooked". In the case of SCBDD, this had been going on for several years. Additionally, I have been able to share DRO's information with many other families in Northeast Ohio through a local disability support group I direct. So, it's not just about them helping ONE family but many!

I urge you to support people with disabilities and ask you to eliminate this damaging proposed amendment from the state budget.

Thank you,

Joy R Spencer
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