

House Committee on Finance and Appropriations

Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services Testimony of Peggy Potts

March 16, 2023

Chairwoman Carruthers, ranking member Liston and esteemed members of the Health and Human Services Subcommittee: my name is Peggy Potts, sister and guardian of Ellen, Anita, Paul Shelton. {My sister, Jane, is Guardian of our brother, Timothy Shelton, in Columbus.) Thank you for allowing me time to share my testimony.

I grew up in the 50's in Hamilton, Ohio. My parents had 8 children, 4 of which were developmentally disabled. After many years, and with guidance from their priest, doctor, and interested family members, it was determined they would be placed at Columbus State Institution, and from there to Orient State Institute. We made round trips to Orient every few weeks to visit them. In 1983, Orient was shut down, then "remodeled" to become a prison.

In May of '83, my siblings were moved to Fairfield Center, Fairfield, Ohio. (named changed to Takoda Trails around 2007) It was such a feeling of happiness to have them so close to home.

We didn't even really know it was an "intermediate care facility". We just thought of it as their home (which it surely was after living in Columbus facilities since early '60's).

At the time, there were 19 residents in a building "home". It was staffed reasonably well, and we had no complaints.

Empowering People took over management of the facility (mid 2000's) and built actual homes with 8 people living in each of 7 homes on the property.

Wages for care staff for several years was more of a labor of love, definitely not good wages. The last few years, particularly since Covid, wages in other jobs have gone up significantly to attract workers; (one of the grocery stores pays \$18 an hour!) Housing, utilities, groceries, etc. have increased almost exponentially.

We're in a situation of short staffing. Care, cooking, feeding, showering, changing clothes, toileting, working with them, many of them non-ambulatory, etc. etc., not to mention loving

them and showing affection. Others who work in fast food, etc. make much more. This is a HARD JOB, a SKILLED JOB, a DEDICATED JOB.

My two sisters, died; Anita, during Covid, Ellen in 2021, from pneumonia. The care and love they received throughout their life was immeasurable, all thanks to the staff at Takoda Trails.

Please consider this request. We're trying to avoid a crisis. Please help us take care of this fragile, dependent and loving population.

Thank you,
Peggy Potts