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Thank you Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Schuring and Ranking Member Driehaus for allowing me to testify in front of the House Finance Committee today. My name is Alina Young and I am Therapeutic Program Worker at the Youngstown Developmental Center where I have worked for 15 years. My job is to take care of resident's daily routine and make sure they're safe. I work with 9 women in one cottage and 5 in a separate cottage.

I believe it is important that we reverse the decision to close the Youngstown Developmental Center because not every person who has a disability, or is a resident is the same. We simply can't pretend that everyone has the same needs and can be placed in a waiver setting such as a group home. Every human being is different and has different needs. We need to make sure we provide quality developmental services in a facility that makes sense for that individual.

Many of the women I have worked with over the years have tried being moved into community facilities. Most of them come back to YDC, and when they do, their behaviors is worse than when they left in the first place.

Our individuals need round-the-clock, 24-7 care. In a small-bed facility there isn't 24-hour nursing available or a doctor on call. Group homes simply don't have the same resources and these individuals need extensive level of supports and services. They're often medically fragile and aggressive. It takes highly trained staff to care for this population and to keep them safe.

If we have a resident with behavior problem, we have five staff to attend to fifteen residents. Proper staffing levels are vital to keeping behaviors in check and everyone safe. Community settings don't have the resources to maintain this level of staffing or don't need them due to the lower needs of the individual. But our individuals are often violent and aggressive, so staff who can redirect behaviors is critical to safety.

Through my work, I've watched what happened 15 years ago when the state closed the mental hospitals around Youngstown. Half of the very people I cared for I saw hanging around the rescue mission, and under the bridges around Youngstown. I volunteer at the salvation army and many of my old clients would come in for services there. I fear that many of the individuals I cared for that I didn't see were already locked up for criminal offenses.

The crisis in mental health due to deinstitutionalization and closing the state mental health hospitals was a huge mistake. I think most policy makers freely admit the Mental Health Act of 1988 led to increased disease and death. The infrastructure simply wasn't there. I think we need to look at the outcomes from the mental health hospital closures to see what happens when we deinstitutionalize in such a reckless way. We have to get our priorities straight and we have to slow down and be much more deliberate.

This isn't about my job. I love my job; I'm well trained and effective at what I do. I could do two jobs if I wanted. However, this is about whether or not the state is going to prioritize and value the lives of the residents we serve. And learn from the mistakes of the past.

Last thing I want is to see when I'm walking around my community in a year so is to see one of my residents walking down the street with no care and no support.

I don't understand why the governor is doing this. People with disabilities are the most vulnerable portion of our society and I feel like people are ganging up on them.

It's just not fair and it's not right.

I ask that you reconsider the closure of the Youngstown Developmental Center. Thank you for taking the time to listen to this important issue.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.