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My name is James Lacking and I want to thank you Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Schuring and Ranking Member Driehaus for allowing me to testify in front of the House Finance Committee today. I am a direct care worker at the Montgomery Developmental Center and have been for the last eight years. Prior to that, I also worked direct care in the mental health field as well as in juvenile corrections. I would like to give you a flavor of the people I serve on a daily basis so you can understand why it's so important to keep MDC as a choice for these families.

You might have heard press accounts several years ago about some children who had been locked in cages to deal with their aggressive behaviors and who were subsequently taken from their foster family. After many years of being placed in other settings, one of the individuals was brought to MDC around 2008. In the beginning at MDC it was very difficult. He had to be what we call hand-over-hand.

He's 33 years old and about 6 foot tall. Apparently, drugs had been in the parents' background. He was non-verbal and wore a diaper when he came to us. He didn't know how to use a glass. He grabbed other people's food. He could walk, but had difficulty doing so with staff. He had a habit of charging. He was also a runner and would go wherever he could get to. He would never sit on furniture or on a bed and just wanted to be on the floor. He held minimum interaction with people.

Staff really had to be on top of him in the beginning. It took months to get him to use furniture: to sit on a couch, to use a bed or to sit at the kitchen table. It probably took a full year for him to really turnaround. But the staff were persistent, and once he started to trust the staff all that changed.

Today he utilizes a spoon. He now functions with simple redirections. He sleeps in his bed. He can walk with staff now. He doesn't charge, he just walks naturally. He's learned how to put his pants up and put his socks on. He even uses the toilet.

It's really been a major transformation, but it took all the skill of MDC's highly trained staff as well as intensive programming to make this change. And that is just **not** available in other settings.

The DCs are the safety net for individuals exactly like this person. Their purpose is to take individuals just like this one and help them be at their full potential, whatever that looks like. My fear is that without a DC in the Dayton area, individuals like this one, will never receive the specialized care they need. They'll just be passed around from facility to facility because no one has the services or

supports they need. The DCs specialize in hard to serve individuals like this. Most of the DC admissions now are individuals who have hurt themselves or others through no fault of their own. They may be dually diagnosed. They even may have gotten into trouble with the law. We alone take these most troubled individuals with the most significant behaviors in the entire system and work with them so they'll have successful outcomes. We raise their quality of life. Please don't shred the safety net by closing Montgomery Developmental Center. Let the center continue to be a choice for families and guardians.

Thank you for this opportunity and I would be happy to answer any questions.