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Chairman Smith and members of Finance Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify before you and tell the story of my sister.

Our sister Vickie is at Youngstown Developmental Center and has been there almost 30 years. Our sister's story is like many other individuals with disabilities in Ohio. The early years weren't easy. She started out at age 18 as a ward of the court at Massillon State Hospital. It wasn't an appropriate placement for her, since she doesn't have mental illness. We were horrified when she ended up pregnant there, and they, of course, terminated the pregnancy. She went from the state hospital and bounced around to group homes where she didn't get appropriate care or get her extensive needs met. She needs close attention and can wander off.

In one instance, she wandered away from a group home off of busy Route 62. She wasn't watched closely enough and she took off. She went to a man's place of business where he raped her. My sister is very easily manipulated. She's like a 4 or 5 year old.

It was basically 12-year roller coaster for Vickie until she went to YDC. She's so proud of herself for making money and getting a paycheck at the local workshop. She still has problems, but they're all dealt with at YDC. The staff at YDC aren't just workers. They are family to her and to us.

They're taking away her life as she knows it. This is what she knows. This is ALL she knows. Even when we bring her home on the holidays. She asks: When am I going home?

Vicki just turned 60 and our mother is 83 years old. At this point does my mother really need to be worrying about if Vickie is safe? Does she need to be making road trips at 83 year's old? A 45-minute drive to Warrensville drive for an 83 year old just isn't possible.

We are a tight-knit family and are committed to Vickie's care. We make sure that one of us is there every weekend. We take her out to eat, take her on outings. Now they're taking that away from us. It's going to destroy our family.

But more importantly, this will turn Vickie upside down. It will be detrimental, no doubt about it. She'll have more behaviors, which will bring on more seizures.

My concern is that Vickie will be on a downward spiral. YDC is her home and they take care very good care of her. She needs structure and sometimes one on one staffing. This is her family. I think it will destroy her and the other people there. They will all go down hill.

They have the right, the God given right to stay. Just because they are of special needs doesn't mean those rights should be taken away.

I'm afraid she's going to hurt mentally, physically and sexually. Group homes don't have the amount of oversight the DCs do. There just aren't as many eyes on them.

I'm very important to Vickie and she's very important to mean. We have rights as U.S. citizens, don't the people with developmental disabilities have those same rights?

It's just awful that someone would do this to another human being.

I really don't see our sister living very long if YDC closes.

Please reconsider this closure and keep YDC open.

Thank you and we can take any questions.