

Chair Smith and Members of the Finance Committee, my name is Ora Davidson of New Madison, Ohio. I want to thank the Committee for allowing me a chance to speak on closure of Ohio's developmental centers.

My Son Marlon Davidson, who lives in the Montgomery Development Center in Huber Heights, was born with a cord wrapped around his neck. He didn't ask to be born this way. It could have been you or me. His IQ is that of an 18-month old baby. He has profound Mental Retardation. Marlon cannot talk except in one letter words and they are few. He can't tell you if he has pain, hungry, hot or cold. He has seizures, in a wheelchair, wears AFO's to support his ankles for pivoting. He has no teeth and his food has to be ground. He takes botox to keep his ankles from freezing up and breaking when he pivots. His ears are easily infected, and he has no bladder control.

Marlon sees no danger and will escape any door he finds open. This has happened with washing machines and he has gotten into a dryer. His mother, Martha, had a lung disease. She was on oxygen and that's when Marlon was admitted in Orient. Martha, his mother died before they closed Orient and they moved Marlon to Springview center in Springfield, Ohio -- then it closed. He is now at Montgomery Development Center. He is happy and I appreciate the care he receives, but it is slated to close.

Marlon is unable to meet his own basic needs such as dressing, bathing and meal preparation. He is unable to defend himself or report harm. Marlon is best served in the development centers where they can keep a medical eye on him.

I'm 71 years old and have had 2 heart attacks with a 5 by-pass surgery. What's going to happen when I can no longer be his guardian? This is the question on every parent and guardian's mind.

Group homes cannot provide his needs as most of the caregivers sleep at night, and they aren't trained to recognize Marlon's seizures. Group homes have their place but not for Marlon. Now a Wavier home won't have nurses on staff but they are on call. What if that nurse is with another client? Rescue will need someone to go with him to the hospital. Can the Wavier home just leave the other residents by themselves? What about this so called Foster Care and Shared Living? They choose who they want living there, then what? The residents need exactly the care they are getting from the developmental centers.

Ohio and other states are following a trend to close all developmental centers. Should Ohio follow this if it is a bad trend? Why not stop this trend and allow them to stay open? Anyone can choose to leave at any time. There are plenty developmental disabled people on waiting list, but that empty bed is not allowed by Ohio to be filled.

Does the residents at the developmental centers not deserve the compassion that Ohio

has shown to everyone that comes here? Just because they are handicapped doesn't mean they don't need stability, that their needs isn't important to life.

Thank you and my son, Marlon Davidson, appreciates you.

Ora Davidson

Parent and Guardian

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