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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. I want to thank you for allowing me to testify before you and to tell my story.

My name is Sean Murphy and I am a Therapeutic Program Worker also known as direct care staff at Youngstown Developmental Center. I have worked there for 11 years.

While, the national trend may be toward smaller and smaller facilities, Ohio's state DD system has been a pioneer in that regard for many years. More than 30 years ago, the state rehabbed nearly all of its Developmental Centers, creating "cottages" and "houses" where individuals could live in smaller and smaller settings. Gone were the large multi-story residential housing units that once were home to thousands of individuals with developmental disabilities. Today, small cottages and condos and houses dot the campuses of YDC and MDC and all the other Developmental Centers. In fact YDC, like MDC, wasn't even built until 1980, long after the changes occurred in the DD system and the old "institutions" were torn down.

It's a myth perpetuated by groups like Disability Rights Ohio that individuals are being held against their will in

large institutions. Those days are long gone. At YDC, our individuals live in “houses” that look like condos, with just five individuals per wing. These are very much unrestrictive, home-like settings. YDC and the other DCs have individual kitchens. We have person-centered programming. It’s very much based on the needs of the individuals. It’s a shame that these so-called advocacy groups keep perpetuating the myth of institutions. Since that idea died a long time ago.

Another myth perpetuated by DRO and other groups like ARC is that the DCs are not community-based. That’s another intentional untruth. We’re VERY community based. Integration is NOT based on bricks and mortar or what the outside of a building looks like. Integration is based on the amount of resources and the amount of staff the provider has. Believe me, there are plenty of individuals who are not getting fully served in group homes or who are isolated and have little contact with their communities because of lack of resources or staff. In waiver settings, if there’s only one staff, and someone doesn’t want to go on an outing, then no one goes. At YDC, if one person wants to go on an outing, one of us takes them. That’s because we have the resources and the staff to do it.

Let me tell you about an individual I took care of who I’ll call Brad. Brad came to our center and was non-verbal, autistic and non-social. He couldn’t be around anyone. He was also very aggressive. I was the first to befriend him. See, Brad had been locked in an attic in foster care. They

left his food on the attic stairs. He was treated like an animal. So basically, he acted like an animal.

When he first came to YDC, he had to eat by himself because he would attack others just for their food. Well, I found out he enjoyed watching old musicals. He was fascinated by them. So I started by watching musicals with him. He really seemed to calm down when he watched them. Then little by little, I would start taking him out on excursions, because he needed to be socialized. He needed interaction. I started taking him to Little League games or to McDonalds so he could get accustomed to small crowds. Then eventually, we would go to larger events. He started to trust people. I worked with him for just over a year. After a year, not only was he socialized, he preferred the company of other people to watching his favorite musicals by himself. Eventually, because of the work me and others did at YDC, Brad was moved to a more permanent home and out of YDC.

I helped Brad turn his life around. But Brad in turn helped me understand the value of the work the DCs provide. Not only are these places home to many individuals, the DCs are the state's only safety net for families and providers who need crisis intervention temporarily. Without this center in the Youngstown area, individuals like Brad will no longer receive crisis intervention or stabilization in this region. They won't be socialized or have successful transitions back to the community, just because they live in Youngstown. And that's just wrong. So it is for Brad that I

strongly urge you to consider keeping Youngstown
Developmental Center open.

Thank you for your time and I'll entertain any questions.