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Thank you Chairman Ryan, Vice Chair Schuring and Ranking Member Driehaus for allowing me to testify in front of the House Finance Committee today. My name is Stacey Graham and I am a Therapeutic Program Worker at Youngstown Developmental Center. I have 24 years experience. I started in July of 1991 at Apple Creek Developmental Center. They closed in 2006.

I am uncomfortable and nervous reading this for an audience. I agreed to do so because I want to represent the men and women of Apple Creek Developmental Center who paid for the final decision to close their facility with their life. May it not be in vain.

When they closed Apple Creek Developmental Center they disfigured a community – emotionally and financially. The emotional devastation for myself and the individuals was and still is difficult to explain. To this day the individuals from Apple Creek ask me to take them home.

The level of regression for the individuals was unbelievable. Their ability to retain skills they had worked a lifetime to achieve suffered irreparable damage. I stopped trying to stay in touch with my surrogate family after the body count reached ten

The financial repercussions of the closing remain visible in the immediate downtown area. Multiple small businesses owners closed. The housing market is now stagnant.

The level of progression towards achieving a better quality of life, demanding higher standards and equality began with Apple Creek developmental center and similar founding State Institutions. The state system became so successful because the laws changed and so did the DCs.

I grew up with Apple Creek developmental in my community. My Mother retired from there. I realize the stigma attached to all institutions remains the same. There is nothing I can say in a 3-minute speech that will erase decades of sensational rumors. State facilities are still misunderstood.

These facilities have always moved forward in a positive manner. The founding institutions allowed us to learn where to improve, grow, change and develop. Every individual is welcome unconditionally, regardless of an individual level of daily living skills, vocational training or aggressive violent behavior. The institution's unique ability to accept all individuals with developmental disabilities exceeds all other comparable settings.

By closing two more state institutions everything the founding institution achieved such as Apple Creek developmental center will be destroyed. This in turn limits the choices available to individuals with profound developmental disabilities and severe medically fragile health conditions. Currently, individuals that are successful with institutional settings are placed strategically back in to the community. If they find the community placement is unsuccessful the DC remains available for continuing support. Where will they go once we are gone? Are we reverting back to a time when profoundly disabled individuals have no choices at all?

I am asking you to please take notice of the fact that parents and family guardians are all against the closing of the state DCs. This decision to close Youngstown and Montgomery Developmental Centers will have emotional and financial repercussions instantly and for a lifetime. Small business owners will suffer the loss of monetary support from the facility in local areas. The unemployment rate will increase locally as well.

In the long run this decision will cost the State of Ohio more money to repair the damage accrued due to the fact these facilities are no longer available. Multiply organizations that are not appropriately equipped to address the needs of profoundly disabled individuals are going to be forced to support them.

Thank you and I am happy to answer any questions.