

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus and members of the House, my name is Peggy Connolly.

I am the parent/guardian of a 39 year old special needs woman who is currently happily employed at TAC Enterprises in Clark County. Families in Ohio have advocated for over 60 years to build services for DD individuals that make them feel safe, secure and to honor them as contributing members of society. I am in opposition of this budget bill because it has elements that limit her **choice** of where she would like to be employed whether that would be in a sheltered workshop doing meaningful work for our community business partners or integrated at a community-based business performing entry level busy work that she had not chosen of her own accord.

System change is a difficult and timely process for everyone involved. With that in mind, I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all of you for the hard work you've done in wanting to understand *both* sides of this intricate and emotional legislation. I've witnessed your wisdom and compassion as you stayed with us, maintained your interest in what we were saying, asked us questions so you could better understand our story and generally have given us, as well as the whole Intellectually Disabled community, honor and respect as being valued constituents. Thank you for that. But our work is not done – for any of us.

I really do understand that this legislation is driven from the Federal level. And I am extremely concerned that the service delivery system the Federal Agencies are proposing is presuming that *they know what is best* for individuals and families without asking them! I have to ask, who would know what is best for my daughter, if not me! I am very concerned that the new waivers services definitions do not allow for funding for sheltered workshops, thus effectively limiting the **choice** of the DD individuals to receive those services. The concept that *everyone* can go out into the community and work is totally unrealistic. We all know that we as individuals are not the same, and individuals with disabilities are no different. They need a spectrum of services that *include* the need for sheltered workshops as a choice of employer.

I understand that you have limits in how effective you can be on our behalf concerning the sheltered workshops and Intermediate Care Facilities in Ohio due to Federal directives. But we are creative Beings and wouldn't it be appropriate to be creative in how we utilize the funds in Ohio that *are* available so that the DD people of Ohio would be honored and valued as having the same freedom of **choice** as the rest of us? While that question may be hard to answer, it is not an unfair question. We have 88 counties in Ohio and all of them have different basic levels of doing business. A rural county and a cosmopolitan county do *not* have the same levels of need. Find that lowest common denominator and work from there. I fully support those of the DD population who are able to maintain employment in the community, but will their integrated job give them the number of hours they had customarily worked in the sheltered workshop?

From what I see, the first efforts of Employment First to integrate DD workers into the community show significantly less hours being offered to our family members than what they currently work in the workshop environment. My daughter works 25 hours/week at the workshop and earns vacation and sick time. If my daughter's job in the community only offers her the opportunity to work 8 hours/week with no vacation or sick time, then she is worse off than she was at the sheltered workshop! I ask that we find a way for her to be able to supplement her remaining hours in the workweek through employment at the sheltered workshop. In turn, the sheltered workshops in Ohio must also become creative in how they conduct business. But the workshops cannot do it alone. They will require your help. They will require at least a minimum level of state funding.

As I fight for my daughter's right to **choose** where she would want to work, I now ask for your help to find a way to have minimal funding available to Ohio counties to keep a sheltered workshop as an employment option for her and to supplement her transition process. I commend our Ohio legislators for working hard on these issues surrounding this legislation, but we are not done! I applaud your wisdom as you've walked the tightrope between Federal mandates and your personal moral code. And your compassion for this vulnerable segment of our society has shined through the murky waters. But our work is not done! We must make the possibility – possible!

Thank you for your time.

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