

Hello. My name is Sheena Potts and I am the sister and guardian for my sister Zelma Kirk who is 60 years old. She is mentally handicapped and functions at the level of about a 7 year old child. She is bi-polar and schizophrenic and has extreme behaviors. She will hit people and she has been known to pull her fingernails and toenails off.

When my mother passed away, I promised her on her death bed that I would look after Zelma to make sure that she would be safe and well cared for.

In about 2008, Zelma moved into Affinity House, an 8 bed ICF in Mount Healthy, Ohio. Zelma has her own private room and a private bathroom that has a walk-in shower in the ICF. This is important because she is very unstable. Before Zelma moved in, I visited Affinity House and met with staff to make sure it was an appropriate place for Zelma to live and that the staff would have the resources to care for her difficult needs. I made the right decision when I chose Affinity for Zelma. Since she has moved into Affinity House all of her extreme behaviors have gone away. The staff there has put together a team of people to support her and she has a psychologist. The team created a plan that has allowed Zelma to manage her behaviors so that she does not hurt herself or others. As her loving sister, you can imagine what a joy it is to know that Zelma is safe and doing so well. Finding the right place for someone with Zelma's challenges is not easy. Moving her from a setting that I know is successful is not something that I would risk. I would not risk Zelma's health and happiness in that way.

I received a call from someone that told me they had met with Zelma at Affinity House and they were asking her if she wants to move out to a group home and that they would pay for her waiver. They told me that Zelma would like to move. I want to be clear. As I said, Zelma operates at the level of a 7 year old child. I have been appointed her guardian because the probate court has found her to be incompetent. Zelma is not able to understand what it means to move into a group home on a waiver. She does not know that such a move would risk all of the supports that have proven successful in helping her control her behaviors and making her so happy as she is today. When Zelma visits me and it is time for her to go back to Affinity she is so tickled because she loves it there and she loves the people there.

It was very confusing to get a call from the person who met with Zelma. They said they were with Disability Rights Ohio. I was confused if they were with Affinity, but he would not answer my question when I asked if he was through Affinity. I wanted to know if he was with Affinity because I do not want her to leave Affinity's care because they have turned Zelma around.

I know how a waiver home works because I have worked in one before. I am worried that there will not be enough support there for Zelma. Zelma takes meds. The people in the waiver homes are not allowed to give meds to her and Zelma does not understand what meds to take. Plus, Zelma is happy also with her workshop that she goes to on Tuesdays and Thursdays. And, if anything happens with Zelma, I get a report from Affinity. They give me a call and tell me everything. This is very important to me. As I promised my mother, I take my responsibility toward my sister very seriously. This group who I do not even know is tearing apart everything that my sister and I worked so hard to put in place — a safe and successful home for her.

I still do not understand who this organization is and why they think they can visit my sister without my permission and without me present. And, I do not know why they think they have the right to tell someone they do not even know where they should live. Imagine if someone did that to a member of your family who needed significant supports to be safe and healthy.

I am here today to report this to you because something needs to be done so that people like my sister who are very vulnerable are not taken advantage of in this way.

I ask you to please support an amendment that will require Disability Rights Ohio to come and explain their activities to the state legislature so that there is some accountability.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheena J. Potts". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed text "Thank you."