

Chairwoman Carruthers, ranking member Liston & honorable committee members... I am honored to be here today!

My name is Fred Major and I originally hail from Euclid, Ohio. I am here as a strong proponent of HB33 and a faithful supporter of the Koinonia organization. They invited me to join them here today advocating for your support in the funding for both ICF as well as Waiver Homes, both of which I am very familiar. I have never met anyone at Kononia that would give me pause or doubt their commitment to the best care possible.

I am the youngest of seven boys, before my parents were blessed with a girl and if you add in the three miscarriages and there beckons the punch line, "Yes... we are Catholic!"

Of my six brothers, three of them were developmentally disabled.

Michael was the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest and his story will set the tone for my testimony here today.

Son #4 was James, who unfortunately died as an infant, and in recent years whose experiences we will focus on is my brother Dennis, son #6.

My parents were the epitome of never feeling sorry for themselves or looking for easier options. My Father, a master carpenter by trade was working full time plus many side jobs doing everything he could to provide a living for his family. It is my understanding that my Father was spending as much on Michael's care at Apple Creek State Hospital than as he was on the mortgage and all the other children combined.

My Mother's Aunt Irene Lennon was the first female lawyer to practice in Lake County, Ohio and the first female to serve as President of the Lake County Bar Association. She joined forces with Monsignor John Fleming the Pastor of our Parish at Saint Williams in Euclid. They came to Columbus unbeknownst to my parents to petition on behalf of our family to make Michael a Ward of the State of Ohio. She knew the importance of supporting families and how expensive it is to meet the basic needs of those with special needs. Everyone knew that my parents would have never agreed to this endeavor, but fortunately this did come to fruition.

I humbly stand before you today inspired by Aunt Irene and the Monsignor's actions. I feel history repeating itself petitioning you to keep the funding available to help ensure subjects like competitive wages for caregivers who more than deserve it for the quality services they provide.

With the State Facilities closing in the early 1990's trends were shifting to group home care. The Koinonia Organization came into my family's life and in hindsight proving to me there are no coincidences and things do happen for a reason! Koinonia took Michael into their care for the next 27 years at an ICF home environment where I can personally testify how happy he was and so well cared for!

Moving on to Dennis, In August of 1965 he suffered a near drowning experience in a Euclid neighborhood community pool. My siblings & I were told an extended period of time with a lack of oxygen to the brain caused him to become developmentally disabled. He started First Grade the next month and spent the rest of his life in special education classes.

Dennis worked at the same restaurant and party center for 43 years making minimum wage living with my parents who like they did with Michael took on the responsibility providing for him.

It was at my brother Michael's burial in July of 2020 I was approached by one of the many Angels at the Koinonia Organization, Heidi Spaeth who was very familiar with Dennis from him visiting Michael over the years. She informed me he was most likely eligible for assistance which again for whatever reasons my parents never pursued.

This is where my education really began!

After a year's worth of testing's and paperwork I was faced with the possibility of never getting Dennis the help he so needed. We had no medical documentation or proof about Dennis' condition except for newspaper articles my Mother saved regarding the pool accident when he was 6 years old. Following advice from friends at Church approaching the end of 2021 I contacted the Euclid City School District.

I will let you decide whether I was lucky or blessed as they were able to retrieve and provide me with psychological documentation and correspondence they found on Dennis in their micro fish files.

Looking through these reports, two illuminating factors left me jaw dropped and speechless. First was the date of these many tests and home visits from School personnel ranging from April thru June of 1965? These were months before the pool accident that Dennis suffered making for a conveniently timed excuse to his condition. It states that Dennis was already scheduled for placement in the adjusted curriculum program in the fall. I cannot answer for my parent's decision to camouflage the cause of Dennis's disability.

The second factor I am compelled to mention is the terminology used in those tests and their results. The Wechsler Intellectual Scale for Children for example had classified Dennis having an IQ of 79 as a "Moron" one rating above an "Imbecile"! These were the technical terms used. I personally have no problem with this as those were the words used back then. The current politically correct climate has people way too sensitive. I grew up surrounded by the word "Retarded" making perfect sense to me as by definition the word means "delayed in development or progress". I am a Mold Maker in the Tool & Die Industry and in any example of physics, you're either moving forward or you are being slowed or retarded. It's a word, not a label.

Summing up, I give much Thanks to the Euclid City Schools making it possible for us to move forward with the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Dennis now enjoys the Blessings and Benefits in a Waiver Home with the Koinonia Organization and no matter what happens to me or my siblings Dennis will always have a roof over his head, 24 / 7 care, 3 square meals a day, activities and friends.

I sincerely thank you in advance for your consideration of the Governor's budget proposal for the DODD. With your approval you will be assuring we don't regress into our past tendencies or terminology, but we keep moving forward for every family like mine, all the organizations like Koinonia and so, so many individuals like my brothers who really deserve this funding!

Frederick V. Major  
[EuclidCowboy@aol.com](mailto:EuclidCowboy@aol.com)  
6528 Fairweather Drive  
Cleveland, Ohio 44130  
(216) 267-4978