

Testimony Regarding Developmental Disabilities
House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services
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Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities
March 17, 2015

Good Afternoon Chairman Sprague, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services. My name is Sandra Coutcher and I am the president of AFSCME Local 3794, representing more than 425 professional, technical, clerical and support staff at the Lucas County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Thank you for allowing me to speak today regarding concerns many individuals in the developmental disability community share regarding changes in the way services are delivered to this sector of society.

In Lucas County, there are 3 Adult Service Centers that serve approximately 900 individuals. This population ranges in age from newborn to 80 plus years old. Members of AFSCME 3794 are proud to serve these individuals with the care and compassion they deserve.

Let me begin by stating that we recognize that individuals that desire Home Community-Based settings should be allowed to transition to these setting with no barriers in place to impede their success. However, the closure of state institutions as well as county residential centers and workshops does not keep in place the “*choice*” for individuals and their families that these facilities may very well be the best system that serves their needs. No family should be forced to choose between a “*bad*” or “*worse*” situation for their loved one. In the Olmstead Decision, the U.S. Supreme Court stated that nothing in its decision condoned the termination of institutional settings or mandated any requirement that community-based treatment be imposed on individuals who do not desire it. As others have previously testified to, the transition to this type of setting does not guarantee an individual will have a better quality of life.

Also, the added influx of individuals having to seek new care settings may cause many of these home community-based settings to become overcrowded as well as being faced with a shortage of trained staff. While we realize the closure of state-operated institutions in Dayton and Youngstown will have a traumatic effect on the individuals served there, we cannot forget the hundreds of individuals served at county-level residential centers and workshops. We also cannot forget the hundreds of dedicated certified and skilled individuals that provide extraordinary care to their local developmental disability community. The knowledge and expertise these individuals hold is vital to improving the lives of the individuals and families they serve. Any closure can have a far reaching effect on individuals receiving care as well as for those individuals that provide it.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, in closing I would like to say that our members as well as others are committed to maintaining the focus of providing quality care for individuals housed in county residential facilities and workshops. We just ask that you join us in this commitment by advocating for these facilities to remain a viable choice for the developmental disabilities community.

Thank you for your time and attention and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.