

Governor Kasich, Lt. Governor Taylor, Ohio Health Transformation Director Moody, DODD Director Martin, and state legislators:

I am here on behalf of the families, the staff, and the residents at Boyd's Kinsman Home, an ICF for adults with IDD. My brother thrived living at this home for 38 years and he worked in a sheltered workshop. During those years he lived at Boyd's, I came to know the other residents and their families, and because of my passion for caring for individuals with disabilities, today I am here at their request to speak for them. They were not able to travel here themselves. I have copies of letters from family members of the residents of Boyd's Kinsman Home and I will be reading excerpts from those letters as well as speaking from my heart from my own experience.

I know that ICF's are not the focus right now, however, the Ohio CMS Transition Plan labels ICF's and sheltered workshops as non-compliant in terms of not being community based. Furthermore, the SPLG final reports states there will be a significant amount of downsizing for ICF beds – to be reduced by 50%.

Boyd's Kinsman Home was started by loving parents who built a home based on love and respect. As you enter Boyd's Kinsman Home you will see a family tree on the wall with each resident's picture. We are family! All the residents consider each other to be brothers and sisters. The staff love and care for the residents as their own family. The residents are so happy – living each day in a safe, secure environment where they feel accepted and so proud of who they are. One mother writes "The pride our daughter has when she takes her sister, brother, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends and shows them her place at Boyd's". Another family member shared with me that prior to coming to Boyd's her nephew had always been made fun of because of his large head. She said that for the first time in his life her nephew is now accepted. Since living at Boyd's, he has become outgoing and social because of that acceptance and love he receives at Boyd's. It breaks my heart to think that this family could be broken up - that these residents will be forced into situations where they will be made fun of and bullied. ICF homes are needed and should continue to be funded. Another mother writes, "There is no place like Boyd's. We searched long and hard to find a place where our son would be happy, continue to have educational opportunities, have good health care, have recreational activities, be close to our home and most of all be safe and be loved by the staff of Boyd's Home." Another family member writes, "My aunt Sue is a happy, outgoing, well-rounded person – who is living a very full life. She loves her family at Boyd's. Of course, she enjoys spending a few days at holiday times with her brother or sister, but when it is time to return to Boyd's she is always anxious to get back. As we turn into Boyd's driveway she always comments 'Home Again'. I have no doubt the residents of Boyd's Kinsman Home lead much fuller lives than they would in different, smaller facilities. At Boyd's, they are involved in attending community and church events, the library, local and professional sporting events, musical concerts, live stage plays, bowling leagues, hay rides, shopping, dining out, and every summer they take a 'family vacation'". Please do not break up this family. It started in 1971 and hopefully the legacy will be allowed to continue.

Individuals should be given a choice of where they want to live and where they want to work. The state's Plan for HCBS in response to the CMS Transition Plan interferes with the fundamental right of choice as clearly defined in Olmstead. There should be options available. How can DODD decide what is

the ideal living arrangement and work environment for all individuals with disabilities. I have been told over and over at meetings led by state officials that individuals with IDD need to be better integrated into the community, that they need to have relationships with non-disabled people, that they need to socialize with people who do not have a disability – these statements all indicate that relationships with others with disabilities are not as valuable. This is insulting and discrimination. The residents of Boyd's Kinsman Home have chosen to live there and they want to continue to live there. They have chosen to work in the workshop that they proudly call "their" workshop. They and their guardians are capable of deciding where they are happy and where they want to continue to live and to work. Their voices should not be ignored, and that's why I am here today - to be their voice. Please listen. GIVE THEM A CHOICE!

Also, please do not overlook the benefits of sheltered workshops. Individuals in sheltered workshop do productive work in a safe environment, where they can be contributing members of society. Their self-esteem is at its peak when they can do a job and be proud of the work they do. What a blessing a sheltered workshop can be – to provide a place where individuals can work each day with no fear of being made fun of or bullied or suffering shame and humiliation because of co-workers' comments and actions. I know of an individual with IDD who attempted to work in a normal work environment and he told me that he never felt accepted. His co-workers would not help him in any way. His co-workers even stole his lunch periodically and said hurtful comments to him. Again I ask, What is wrong with working in a sheltered environment if that is what they choose? The residents that I know do productive work at their workshop. They contribute to the community by spending their hard-earned money right here in Ohio. They go out to eat, attend movies, Scrapper's Baseball games, Phantom's Hockey Games, concerts, Putt-Putt Golf, swimming, bowling, shopping, vacationing, etc. Now that is contributing to society; that is called giving back.

I am a member of VOR and I network with other providers from across Ohio who share the same concerns that I have. I am also communicating with DAA (Disability Advocacy Alliance) to collectively protect choice.

In summary I would like to say, please give individuals with intellectual disabilities a choice of where they want to live and where they want to work. A mother writes, "Many lives depend on your action – including our other two grandchildren who will need these homes as they get older."

The voice of individuals with IDD should not be ignored, that's why I am here today – to be their voice.

Carlene E. Jones Kinsman, Ohio

