

May 6, 2015

Chairman Dave Burke  
Senate Medicaid Committee  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Ranking Member Capri Cafaro  
Senate Medicaid Committee  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Burke, Ranking Member Cafaro and Members of the Medicaid Committee,

Disability Advocacy Alliance is a statewide advocacy group made up of families and guardians dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Ohio.

We strongly support changes in HB 64 which strengthen the Developmental Disabilities Bill of Rights. In keeping with the U.S. Supreme Court *Olmstead* decision and the Americans with Disabilities Act, these amendments provide for the right of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to access the full continuum of care when considering residential and employment options. Additionally, these changes retain the right of individuals to make decisions for themselves while ensuring those individuals with profound needs can benefit from the support of their families and guardians when making critical decisions which affect their health, safety and quality of life.

Threats from Disability Rights Ohio and proposals in the Executive Budget have caused deep worry among individuals with developmental disabilities and their families who benefit from Intermediate Care Facilities, facility-based day programs and sheltered workshops. We came together to express our objection to these proposals through a petition campaign which generated nearly 19,000 signatures in five weeks. This outrage was a direct reaction to public policymaking taking place without the input of families and guardians - those with the most intimate knowledge of the needs of the vulnerable individuals affected.

Director Martin has rightly acknowledged that Ohio's Developmental Disabilities system was formed by the loving hands of families and guardians. The success of these programs has been demonstrated by the passionate advocacy that has taken place in the halls of the Ohio Assembly.

Like all families and guardians, we celebrate and look forward to the day our children can make decisions for themselves. Unfortunately for some parents of children with disabilities, this day never comes. To protect the health, safety and quality of life of Ohioans with profound needs, we respectfully ask you to honor the essential role of guardians in their lives. Doing so fully

respects the right of self-advocates capable of making decisions for themselves. We urge you to support changes to the DD Bill of Rights which recognize the diverse and oftentimes acute needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Ohioans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caroline Lahrman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light yellow rectangular background.

Caroline Lahrman  
Disability Advocacy Alliance  
Spokesperson

CC:

Senate President Keith Faber  
Speaker Cliff Rosenberger  
Chairman Scott Oelslager, Senate Finance Chair  
Ranking Member Michael Skindell, Senate Finance Committee  
Members of the Senate Finance Committee  
Chairman Ryan Smith, House Finance Committee  
Ranking Member Denise Driehaus, House Finance Committee  
Representative Robert Sprague  
Representative Emilia Sykes  
Representative Barabara Sears  
Representative Nickie Antonio  
Representative Mark Romanchuk