



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release
April 16, 2015

Families, caregivers thank lawmakers for disabilities “closure commission”

Westerville – Dozens of family members and staff from Montgomery and Youngstown Developmental Centers today praised legislators for moving one step closer to keeping the doors open of two state facilities where severely developmentally disabled individuals reside. The Ohio Dept. of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) announced in February it would close two developmental centers where nearly 180 individuals live and approximately 400 employees work.

Staff and family members from the Dayton and Youngstown areas attended a budget hearing today regarding the House Substitute Bill, which calls for a commission that would review the administration’s decision to close the two state-operated facilities.

Ora Davidson, whose son lives at the Montgomery Developmental Center, praised the decision: “I thank this committee on behalf of dozens and dozens of parents and family members whose loved ones live in the 10 state-operated Developmental Centers. With your actions, you have proved that you are true advocates for the most vulnerable in our state.” This is the third developmental center his child has lived in. The other two, Orient and Springview Developmental Centers, also closed.

According to the revised state budget language, a 13-member commission of lawmakers and stakeholders would review and make the final decision regarding any announced closure of a state developmental center.

The union representing the majority of employees in DODD has questioned the closure decision given a growing waiting list of 40,000 individuals who need services and a shortage of housing in the DD system. DODD has aggressively downsized the ten Developmental Centers already, with more than 400 hundred individuals being placed in other settings in the last four years alone, a 40 percent reduction.

“This is a brave and compassionate move on the part of state legislators who acknowledge the need for specialized services for some individuals,” said Christopher Mabe, the union president whose organization, the Ohio Civil Service Employees Association, represents the majority of employees in DODD.

Families and caregivers who work in the state’s disability system have spent numerous days in budget hearings to plead with legislators to try to stop the closures and support efforts to keep the developmental centers a residential option for families.

“It is our hope that the language will bring extra scrutiny and thoughtfulness to a DC closure. Ultimately, it is our hope, of course, that the commission will put a stop to the closures altogether,” said Davidson.

A rally is planned this Saturday, April 18 in Huber Heights near Dayton to bring community attention to the developmental centers and to thank activists and lawmakers for their efforts.

OCSEA represents approximately 30,000 state employees who work in a wide range of security, regulatory, administrative, direct care, maintenance, customer service and other positions, including

approximately 1,800 who work in the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities. For more information, contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).