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House of Representatives  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Harrisburg

January 11, 2017

The Honorable Ted Dallas  
Secretary  
PA Department of Health and Human Services  
333 Health and Welfare Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Office of Developmental Programs Proposed Changes  
095-16 Appendices A-H

Dear Secretary Dallas:

I write to add my comments to those of the families and caregivers that will be affected by the ODP's proposed changes related to employment and day services. I have a unique perspective as I am the primary caregiver to my adult disabled sister, who suffers physical as well as intellectual disabilities. I also serve as the State Representative to a number of the families affected by these proposed changes whose adult disabled children work at an APS workshop. I appreciate your consideration of the following comments.

1. It is important that the ability to choose the appropriate employment opportunity remains with the disabled citizen. There are a number of older disabled persons who have thrived in the sheltered workplace environment after experiencing other environments that simply did not meet their needs or abilities, or who could not find or sustain employment anywhere else. Removing this option from these citizens seems to be an unintended consequence of these new regulations, and not a benefit to many of them, who are happy at APS.

Each participant should be measured on their own needs and abilities. To enforce stimulating situations upon persons who perform best in a more structured environment seems unfair and surely not what was intended when these changes were written.

I respectfully request that the required percentages of time "in the community" are removed from the waiver, enabling choice for each participant, or that these regulations are, at the very least, delayed. The schedule is overly aggressive – particularly when dealing with people for whom change itself creates a stressful situation.

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2. Raising self-sufficient and productive members of society remains the primary goal of all parents, including parents of the developmentally disabled. It could be considered discriminatory of ODP to limit the number of participants able to work in facilities that have been designed to meet these specific needs and which they enjoy. To reduce the number of available positions in our community for our disabled people seems counterproductive.

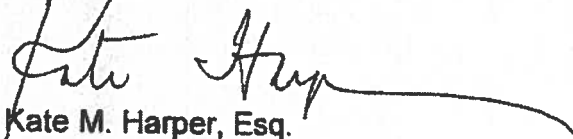
**Like everyone else, intellectually disabled people are often proud of their ability to do the job they do now, and very satisfied with their lives. They *like* the very programs the regulations will destroy.**

**I respectfully request that the state remove the 100 person limit on facility based programs. I am afraid these regulations and others will drive some programs to close – leaving the disabled people they currently serve without viable options.**

There is an immeasurable value to providing opportunities for development and enhanced self-esteem for our Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens. I agree that we must be diligent in ensuring that we protect the rights of those who are disabled, but we must be sure however well-meaning, that our government regulations don't close programs that are working. Please "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kate M. Harper, Esq.  
61<sup>st</sup> Legislative District

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Cc: The Honorable Gene DiGirolamo,  
Chair Health & Human Services Committee  
Melanie Brown, Executive Director, Human Services Committee  
Ted Schwartz  
Jan Reddington