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Pa. Office of Developmental Programs

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To Whom it May Concern

This letter is a plea to ODP not to go forward with changing a program that is so vital to the wellbeing of special needs people. I have known Carlie Jones since she was a baby. I have watched in amazement how parents have dedicated their lives to making Carlie's life one with love, encouragement, understanding. And most certainly the avenues in their lives they have chosen to make sure Carlie is happy, healthy, content and encouraging her to be the vital and active person she is today. Since Carlie's graduation from high school, she has the experience of going off to work (like her siblings) and being, in her eyes, independent and self-sufficient. She is a gymnast, figure skater, she loves music, she is an athlete and she is a very active young lady. All these activities have all been accomplished through Carlie's determination to be like her sisters and her parents unending support, encouragement and volunteering to make Carlie's dreams come true. I would like to describe how the Jones family volunteers and supports. They have coached Special Olympics for almost 20 years, along with coaching gymnastics, attending every sports program that Carlie has ever entered and participating to make sure that when the call went out for volunteers they were there. Working hours upon hours every week to make sure that Carlie and her fellow athletes had what they needed to compete. When it came to budget cuts in the school district, which meant subpar busing for special needs the Jones worked to change what was a nightmare for special needs people who were simply trying to get to school.

*Now they are faced with the threat that Carlie's job will no longer be available to her. This cannot happen! Why would any government take away a program that enables special needs people to work in an environment where they are safe and happy and gives them the feeling of being independent and self-sufficient? Believe me when I say the Joneses have done their homework. They have researched the states that have implemented the ODP law that President Obama signed and found just how devastating this law is. It forces these work centers to go out of business. Going out into the community to work is **not** an option for many participants. So what are they left with? Staying home watching television, possibly with a care giver, until their parents can get home from work, having their self-esteem and sense of independence taken away let alone all the interaction with the people they work with and the people that are there to make sure they are safe and happy. This is a disgrace*

to take a vital program away from people who so very much depend on it. It is not about the small amount of money they make it's about the benefits, the safety, the interaction with people and independence that goes along with the work program that they are so dependent upon. Why our government would even consider changing anything about this program is beyond understanding.

*My hope is that you will hear all the voices of reason and reconsider any changes to the program in place now. Help our special needs friends, brothers' sisters or children maintain the program that best suits **their** needs.*

Sincerely,

Carol Weidner and admirer and friend of Carlie Jones