

3140

RECEIVED
12/29/16

Kathy Cooper

From: ghjonesoms@verizon.net
Sent: Thursday, December 29, 2016 3:10 PM
To: IRRC
Subject: Prevocational Day Program Funding - DHS Regulation 14-540

To Whom It May Concern:

I am totally and unequivocally against The Department of Human Services (DHS), Office of Developmental Programs (ODP) plan to alter pre-vocational day programs. Sheltered workshops like Associated Production Services (APS) would be forced to close. If these workshops don't meet the 75% community-based requirement, they will lose their funding. Do you work only 25% of the time? People with disabilities want a choice in their life. This law takes away their choice.

My daughter, Carlie Jones, is 25 years old and works at Associated Production Services, Inc. (APS), a work shelter program. Carlie gets up and goes to work Monday through Friday just like her mother, father, brother, and three sisters. She feels good about this, as she is also doing what the rest of her family is doing. She does real work and gets a real paycheck. Carlie is a quiet person and has had horrifying experiences of being lost in the community. Carlie and her family have no desire to decrease her working in a safe environment to 25%, and go into the community 75% of the time. Carlie is out and about in the community almost every day with family members or her friends at our discretion. ***There should not be a law making it mandatory that 75% of the time a person with intellectual disabilities must be in the community! This is discrimination against the person with disability's rights. The idea that a person in government knows what is better for our special-needs daughter than her parents is preposterous! The results of the last national election support the idea that government should not be mandating these types of changes!*** Where is Carlie's choice of going to work every day? This law takes away that right. Work (if a job is available at a workshop) 25% of the time, and go out into the community 75% of the time! Do you want to work 25% of the time?

APS, which has provided gainful employment for her and her coworkers, may soon disappear. This is unacceptable! APS, a workshop, is safer than outside employment, providing protection and supervision of adults with disabilities. *APS is not as demanding as community employment and provides work which is comparable to a person's capabilities.* APS provides a social environment and opportunities for friendship among their peers. Structure and routine provide consistency, an important benefit in any individual's life. APS and most sheltered workshops rely on government funding. Without an exception to this DHS, ODP Pennsylvania Law to provide 75% community integration, APS and work shelter programs will lose their funding and be forced to close.

The ODP Mission states: The mission of the Office of Developmental Programs is to support Pennsylvanians with developmental disabilities to achieve greater independence, CHOICE and opportunity in their lives. Where is my daughter's CHOICE? ODP should not be able to dictate Carlie's CHOICE. This law takes away any choice that Carlie presently has. It is our choice, and Carlie's choice, to remain working at APS, a sheltered workshop. Community-based services are not a one-size-fits-all solution and Pennsylvania should recognize this by offering both options of community employment or work-sheltered employment. Employment is one of life's major activities. If sheltered workshops are eliminated, those individuals who are not qualified, or who do not wish to participate in community-based employment, will be left with no options for employment. Even individuals who are qualified for community based employment will have a hard time securing and maintaining employment

during economic downturns. Eliminating sheltered workshops will decrease the options for many adults with disabilities. You say "we're not closing sheltered workshops" – but you are - without funding they will not be able to exist.

In 2008, Maine phased out the use of sheltered workshops. Presently 2/3rds of those previously employed in workshops are no longer employed, and those who are working earn less per week because of the reduction in the number of hours worked.

In Washington State, only 17% of people with intellectual disabilities have found work in the community. If a person with developmental disabilities has not been able to find employment after one year, they become eligible for publicly-funded RECREATIONAL activities instead. Is this what Pennsylvania wants for its people with intellectual disabilities?

Respectfully,

Gary H. Jones, D.D.S.
1803 Jill Road
Willow Grove, PA 19090

215-659-3431