

Testimony of Kaye Lenkner, Project Coordinator of Self Advocates United as 1

PA Waiting List Campaign Olmstead Hearing, March 31, 2014

I am currently the statewide Project Coordinator of Self Advocates United as 1 (SAU1), a PA group of people with intellectual/developmental disabilities with a mission to support the self advocacy of people with disabilities for positive impact in our communities and in people's lives. My job is not to speak for others, but to support them to speak up for themselves. I do this through listening to what they want to do and say and providing the technical, logistical and administrative support that enables them to do just that.

Our advocacy work is funded through a grant from the PA Developmental Disabilities Council. Through that and other funding we have visited each state center several times. Residents at the state centers have been active participants in our monthly teleconferences – as long as they are held during daytime hours when the DRN advocate at each site is available to facilitate.

One of our rounds of visits to all 5 centers was funded by the Office of Developmental Programs. We were asked to provide self advocacy skills training. We met with residents at each center and during the morning talked to them about their civil rights to speak up and shared some skills about speaking up. In the afternoon we had a question and answer session with 5 SAU1 Board members who live, work and play fully in community.

The questions we received showed us that the residents, staff, and family members really have no idea of how folks can be supported to live fully in community. Questions such as "Will I be able to see my family?" "Will I be able to leave my house?" "How will I get my meals?" "Who will take me shopping?" "Will I be able to have a wheelchair?" and many others show residents and staff are uninformed.

I can tell you that I have never heard a resident say this is where I want to be; I want to stay here. I have heard them say this is what my family wants or says is best for me.

I am honored to have with me today Savannah Logsdon-Breakstone, an autistic young lady who also has supports for mental health issues. Savannah worked with self advocates from all over the country on a national paper defining true community. I am delighted that Carl Mando and Leroy Hammond are eager to share with everyone a bit of what their lives were like at Polk Center – but more importantly, what their lives are like now – fully immersed in true community with significant supports.

Thank you for sharing your valuable time to learn more about the promises we have yet to keep and the unfinished business of honoring the Olmstead Act.