

Good morning Chairman DiGiralomo and Legislators. Thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of my sister, Lauren Lotzi, who resides at White Haven Center, an Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), and other individuals who are profoundly intellectually and physically disabled who cannot speak for themselves.

My name is Patricia Degen and I am a retired IT Specialist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a representative of KIIDS (Keeping Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities Safe), and a volunteer with P.A.W.S (People and Animals Who Serve). I visit White Haven Center regularly with Bella Mia, a therapy dog.

In the late summer and fall of 2017 and August of 2018, I secured a vendor spot for an information booth at five festivals in Northeastern Pennsylvania for Petition Signing to Vote NO on HB1650 to stop closure of Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) in Pennsylvania that care for the profoundly disabled. We are proud to say 10,123 signatures were obtained throughout Pennsylvania in a short time frame. We believe there are many many more Pennsylvania residents willing to sign our petition than not. We believe if we had done an online petition, we would have obtained millions of signatures from Pennsylvania residents. While myself and others maned this booth, we encountered the following responses from festival patrons:

- White Haven Center gives excellent care.
- White Haven Center is a wonderful facility.
- White Haven Center has been there for a long time.
- I am alarmed to hear of the proposal to close White Haven Center.
- Why would White Haven Center be closed?
- Where would the individuals be moved?
- Who wants to close the White Haven Center?
- Is the proposed closure of White Haven Center because of money?
- The care in a group home for some individuals would be inappropriate.
- Is a group home the only choice?
- I work or worked at White Haven Center.
- I have a family member who resides or resided at White Haven Center.
- I have a family member who works or worked at White Haven Center.
- I have a friend who works or worked at White Haven Center.
- I will sign the petition.
- The pictures of the White Haven Center are amazing, it looks like a great place.
- Are they allowing admittance to the facility?
- I am struggling to get help for my disabled child.
- My child is Autistic.
- I am on a waiting list to get help for my disabled child.
- Many of the Intermediate Care Facilities are wonderful facilities, I fear eliminating this choice will bring us back to the dark ages.
- I'm from New Jersey, can I sign the petition?
- What can I do to help?

A few of the festivals, have invited us to return as an information vendor to upcoming festivals to continue petition signing.

The profoundly disabled need to get adequate care and be kept safe; all facilities need strict guidelines, oversight, and accountability.

Closing White Haven Center and the other state centers denies needed care to the most vulnerable segment of the intellectually and physically disabled community. Come visit White Haven Center and the other state centers to see the level of disability and the quality of care provided and you will agree there is a need to continue to support state centers in Pennsylvania and open them to others in need. One size does not fit all!

A tragedy can occur in any family resulting in a disabled individual. No one is shielded. It can happen by complications in pregnancy, problems during labor and birth, accident, virus, fever, insect bite, illness, disease, toxins, poisons, genetics, alcohol and drugs, etc. Human beings who cannot care for themselves should be a top priority over any other expense!

It is our hope is to keep White Haven Center open and other facilities of its kind and reopen its doors as a matter of "choice."

With that said, we present to you 10,123 signatures.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter!