

**Tammy Luce:**

Members of the Committee, my name is Tammy Luce. I am a Residential Services Aide at Polk Center and President of AFSCME Local 1050. Thank you, Darrin and Bill for your true and powerful words.

I know Bill touched on it, but it can't be overstated: we are here for the individuals who we care for at Polk and White Haven. They get taken care of at the centers. They get everything they need. I can't imagine them out in a group home and not having what they have at the centers.

I hear a lot of talk from DHS about "community-based" settings and "empowering individuals" to make their own decisions. Both of those points are disingenuous. What they need to remember is these state centers are communities within themselves, and they are crucial parts of the surrounding communities that they are part of. This is home for these individuals. They have friends and family there. They have activities they can take part in. They have their own store at Polk Center. This is a community.

And I don't see what's so empowering about forcing them out of their home. This doesn't seem to be the residents making their own decision. This decision was made for them and for us as employees, and none of us were consulted, nor were the families of the residents.

The way this was handled was a total disgrace and a slap in the face of everyone who lives and works at Polk and White Haven. If DHS wanted to go through with this, there was a much better way to handle it than the way they did. They need to reverse this decision and go back to the drawing board. There are more humane ways to balance

the budget than killing our jobs and ripping vulnerable people out of the place they call home.

We are here as a voice of the individuals we care for. We are their voice, and they are our hearts.

Members of the Committee, please stand with us. Stand with us against this ill-advised decision to close these centers. Stand up for those who are unable to stand up for themselves. Do the right thing. Thank you.