

From: melaine snyder <melryan25@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 15, 2019 5:12 PM
To: Erin Raub <Eraub@pahousegop.com>
Subject: Testimony for white haven center hearing oct 21

I'm a current commonwealth employee at the white haven center, my job title is an RSA (residential service aide). I've worked here under that title for just under 4 amazing years and wouldn't trade them for the world. Some are still under the misconception of state run facilities like these for intellectually disabled individuals are institutions and that couldn't be further from the truth, we are always being compared to pennhurst and that thought makes me so sick to hear and couldn't be any further from the truth. The white haven center currently houses 111 individuals, unfortunately one of my gentlemen in my personal section recently passed from severely declined health after hearing about the closure, he was number 22 of 112. He used to live with his family in the Philadelphia area until he reached his teenage years where he kept having situations of elopement and one of those times led to a serious accident in which a car had hit him due to his inability of recognizing dangerous situations. From that moment forward his family made the difficult decision and placed him in the care of the white haven center. He lived an incredible life at the center, went on countless day trips and vacations, did everything from fishing to going to ballgames and having visits from his family. His family has since passed and he was left with an incredible sister in law who made sure to come visit him and always made sure to schedule visits to her home and made darn sure that her children and the rest of the family could be there to see him. Fast forward to September 16th when my little buddy passed away, I walked into work that morning after hearing the horrible news that he had passed, I walked into my section to be greeted by another individual whom is a generous caring man. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said "mom, is it true? Did he really die, is he really gone?" With tears pouring down my cheeks and his, all I could do was hold him tight and barely get out a yes, yes it's true. In just under 4 years there I officially felt my first real heartbreak, in such a short amount of time I've created such an incredible bond with my individuals that I know in my heart I can call them family. There is nothing I won't do to make sure they are taken care of physically and emotionally. I'm so much more than just an aide to my individuals, I'm a parent figure, a sister and a friend. What they go through, I go through. I can go on and on about how amazing our campus is and all the amenities we have for them but that's all listed on our webpage as public knowledge. I can go on and on about how they go on more day trips, vacations, camping, concerts and sporting events than I do but that's all charted and in the legal paperwork for the department of human services to read also. What I can tell you is that you will never find a group home who cares for these individuals as much as white haven center cares for them, I can tell you how hard we fight when our individuals are threatened, I can also tell you that the care they receive at the center can never be matched anywhere else. Please consider co-signing and sponsoring the house bill 1918 for a moratorium on the scheduled closing of my individuals home.

Respectfully yours,

Melaine Sturm