

Testimony Provided by Nancy Murray during the Pennsylvania House of
Representatives Human Services Committee's Olmstead Hearing

March 31, 2014

Good Morning. My name is Nancy Murray. I am the President of the Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, and the parent of two adult children with intellectual disabilities. The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, a member of ACHIEVA, supports more than 14,500 children and adults with disabilities and their families throughout western Pennsylvania. ACHIEVA provides early intervention, advocacy, family support, recreational opportunities, vocational and residential supports, in-home care, and special needs trusts and long term planning for families.

This morning you have heard powerful personal stories. Other presenters have shared with you the most current information about national trends and best practices in providing community supports for people with disabilities. Our focus has been on community supports because no one wants to live in a facility.

Ask yourself, would you want to live in a nursing home, intermediate care facility or private licensed facility? Or, would you want to live at home with support services? Would you want to have a loved one live in a facility or live in their home with assistance? Do you want children to have to live in segregated congregate care facilities or in homes where they can go to school and enjoy community activities with other children and their families? Children, especially, deserve to live with families.

Although Pennsylvania is lagging behind in some respects, it is our firm belief that Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth have the necessary talent, creativity and passion to make our state a leader in innovative, cost-effective community supports for children and adults with disabilities. However, we need you and all members of the Pennsylvania Legislature to make the commitment to ensure that people in need of services receive them in their homes and communities and not in segregated facilities. A facility is not a home.

Therefore, we respectfully ask you and other members of the Pennsylvania Legislature to do the following:

➤ Urge the Secretary of the Department of Public Welfare and the Governor's Office to institute an immediate moratorium on all admissions to all state centers.

➤ Pass a Resolution to direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to study and issue a report on the closure of the five remaining state centers including economic impact, potential for economic development of the five properties, opportunities for workers in the post-closure environment and the potential to reinvest post-closure financial savings in community-based supports for people on the waiting list for services.

Please remember these six words...a facility is not a home. Thank you.