

September 6, 2013

Mental Health and Wellness Commission Hearing
Chaired by Lt. Gov. Brian Calley

We are Richard and Judy Parker. We live in St Clair Township. We have a son, Joshua, who is 20 years old. Josh is developmentally disabled. Josh has lived in a home of your own for over a year in Fort Gratiot.

In the future changes will happen. Josh doesn't accept change easily. Getting out of a routine for one day, may cause as much as three days to get him back to normal. We will not always be there for him. We continually have to advocate for Josh's needs. Who will do this for Josh in the future? We want to know that his needs are cared for. We hoped in choosing a home of your own for Josh, we gave him a permanent residency. We didn't want Community Mental Health to have the ability of moving him around at their will and causing Josh undo stress! There is a lack of beds in St. Clair County for housing the disabled. Community Mental Health no longer supports new homes of your own. The owners of foster care homes are getting older and are retiring from the business. This means that families will be forced to keep their disabled loved ones home. What will be their future when their family passes away? Or will we go back to the days of institutions?

We feel that Community Mental Health is going backward. They have autistic, mental illness, and drug/alcohol issues that have taken priority and the developmentally disabled are being left behind. One of the principles of the Michigan Department of Community Health is freedom. The freedom to choose where you live, who lives with you, what you do, and where you go in your community. The hours spent with CLS workers and support staff are being reduced. The ability to go into the community for nighttime and social activities have been cut back or greatly reduced. We didn't want to see this happen! We are sending this letter to help advocate for our son and others who have no one to speak for them.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity today to express our concerns.

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