

May 15, 2019

My name is Shelbi Hindel. I live in Columbus, Ohio.

I am speaking to urge you to remove Section 5123.603 from the proposed state budget as it could profoundly harm people with disabilities in Ohio. It creates useless and senseless legislative oversight of a non-profit corporation, Disability Rights Ohio (DRO). DRO is an independent organization designated by the governor and regulated by federal law as the protection and advocacy system and client assistance program in Ohio to investigate instances of abuse and neglect and to protect the rights of people with disabilities. No other private advocacy or legal organization is subject to this type of review. As I understand it, under this piece of legislation there would be a review every two years and another firm could be appointed to handle legal cases involving people with disabilities. I deeply believe this process would be detrimental for people with disabilities. People who work at Disability Rights Ohio understand and know the laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities that affect us. They believe in our abilities and capabilities. This, unfortunately, can not be said of all firms. Under the current system we know where to call to obtain information and assistance. With the possibility of change every two years this contact information may not be known nor readily available.

I personally have worked with Disability Rights Ohio on two cases. My first case was against the Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired. I had been a stay-at-home mom for many years. My children were growing up and I was facing the loss of support granted during my divorce so needed to return to the work force. I wanted to be trained and licensed as a Business Enterprise operator. I was very familiar with the program as my former husband works in this program. He received his thirty years certificate this month at our conference. I had worked with him from time to time during our marriage. I needed a bit of extra help which the Business Enterprise training coordinator nor my counselor wanted to give. Their answer was to remove me from the training program. I believed in myself and wanted this opportunity to work and support myself. DRO attorneys Barbara Corner and William Puckett helped me remain in the training program. It was a battle that we were victorious in. Now I am licensed, and work two of the facilities in this fantastic program. One is my permanently assigned facility and the other I am doing on a temporary basis.

The second case was to make absentee voting accessible using adapted technology such as a screen reading program. I worked with DRO attorney Jason Boylan on this. We were victorious on this, too. Now blind and deaf-blind people can cast a private absentee ballot.

Disability Rights Ohio helps elevate the voice of self-advocates and gives individuals and organizations a resource that they need to be effective in their advocacy.

DRO has been an invaluable organization helping me fight for my rights and those of people with disabilities across the state. We people with disabilities deserve an independent voice to uphold laws and to fight against discrimination without the worry of retaliation. I urge you to support people in Ohio who have a disability by eliminating this damaging section from the state budget.

Disability Rights Ohio was started in 1980 and transitioned out of state government for the purpose of being more independent. We deserve to have them remain as they are without fear of retaliation or intimidation for their effective pursuit of the rights of Ohioans with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony to you.

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