

Testimony in Support of Removing 55 Pa. Code §§ 6100.444 and 6100.445

Delivered by William Wright, Founder & President, Love Ran Red Foundation

June 4, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on why I support removing 55 Pa. code 6100.444 and 6100.445.

My name is William Wright, and I'm the Founder and President of the Love Ran Red Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

My wife and I started the foundation in March of 2016 because we — like many other parents in the intellectual disability community — were asking ourselves one painful question:

“What happens to our son when we can no longer care for him?”

We weren't alone in this fear. Across the Lehigh Valley and the state, families like ours are desperate for long-term housing solutions that are safe, inclusive, and empowering.

In addition to housing, the Love Ran Red Foundation is also committed to creating meaningful employment opportunities.

We run an employment program called Duke's Delites — an all-natural dog treat company that currently employs 12 adults with intellectual disabilities.

This program gives our team members not just a paycheck, but a true sense of purpose, accomplishment, and community engagement.

Our employees consistently express how much they enjoy working at Duke's Delites, particularly because it allows them to work alongside peers who share similar experiences and abilities — creating a supportive and empowering environment.

Today, I'm here not just as a nonprofit leader, but as a father of a 26-year-old son with Autism — to urge you to remove 55 Pa. Code Sections 6100.444 and 6100.445 from Pennsylvania's state code.

At Love Ran Red Foundation, we have a committed donor who wants to help us create a neuro-inclusive community in the Lehigh Valley — a home for our son and 19 other individuals with intellectual disabilities. Our vision includes 20 one-bedroom individual apartments, where each resident can choose their preferred service provider to receive the support they need to live independently.

This is a \$4–\$6 million project — and it would not cost the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania a single penny to build.

In fact, independent estimates suggest that each unit could save the state up to \$6 million per unit over 15 years. Without this housing, my son will likely end up being shuffled around in expensive group homes or in “shared living arrangements”, a euphemism for adult foster care.

This is the kind of solution that makes both human and fiscal sense. Under the current PA code, it may never be allowed to happen.

Sections 6100.444 and 6100.445 were originally created with good intentions — to prevent the return of institutional settings and protect individuals from segregation. But today, they’ve become barriers to the very outcomes they were meant to support.

They limit choice, discourage innovation, and block access to community-based housing options that reflect people’s real lives and real preferences.

Let me be clear: housing choice is not just about shelter. It’s about dignity, freedom, and the opportunity to build a life on your own terms.

Right now, these rules often prevent individuals from choosing:

- Where they want to live,
- Who they want to live with,
- And what kind of support they receive.

That’s not person-centered planning. That’s a one-size-fits-all regulation in a world that needs flexibility and individualization.

Across the country, families, advocates, and providers are developing creative, neuro-inclusive housing models — intentional communities, supportive apartment clusters — built around real relationships and community engagement.

But in Pennsylvania, these models are blocked because of the outdated definitions and restrictions in 6100.444 and 6100.445.

Removing these sections does not mean removing safeguards. It does not reduce oversight or safety.

What it would do is empower people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to:

- Choose to live closer to friends with disabilities (like you or I can do).
- Access a needed safety net when service provider staff is not available.
- And live lives filled with purpose and connection.

It would remove Pennsylvania specific regulatory barriers that overreach federal requirements for HCBS Settings Rule and the Olmstead decision.

Let's talk plainly:

When you or I look for a home for our families, what's the first thing we think about?

The neighborhood, is it desirable?

Is it safe? Is it close to work or school? Is it accessible? Can I afford it?

Are their parks, shops, sidewalks, and a sense of community?

In short: Is it a place where our loved ones can live well?

That's exactly what families like mine want for our children — and what people with disabilities want for themselves.

But under Pennsylvania's housing regulations, individuals with disabilities are denied the basic right to choose a home in a desirable, community-centered neighborhood if there are already too many people with disabilities that live in the same building or planned community. What if we told another minority group that they could not access their public benefits if they lived too close to another person of their minority? Withholding essential support services because the state has set arbitrary maximum limits on the number of people with disabilities who can live or work in the same place is discrimination.

These restrictions don't enhance safety — they enforce control.

They don't protect dignity — they deny it.

And they don't reflect reality — they ignore it.

Housing should be a model for inclusion, not another imposed limitation due to disability.

That begins with trusting individuals and families to know what works best for them.

In addition to our personal commitment and professional experience, we are not alone in calling for change.

As of today, we have gathered 1,693 signatures from Pennsylvania residents on a Change.org petition in support of removing Sections 6100.444 and 6100.445. This is not just a policy issue — it's a movement backed by real families, real advocates, and real community members who believe in the right to choose safe, inclusive housing.

So today, I'm asking you — as legislators, policymakers, and public servants — to take this important step.

Let's remove Sections 6100.444 and 6100.445.

We're not saying our housing model is the right choice for everyone. What we are saying is that parents, families, and individuals — the people who know their own needs best — should have the freedom to choose - a freedom afforded to those who don't have a disability.

Let's open the door to more freedom, more dignity, and more opportunities for Pennsylvanians with intellectual disabilities.

Thank you.

William Wright
Founder/President
Love Ran Red Foundation
Duke's Delites

*The **Olmstead decision** refers to the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in **Olmstead v. L.C.**, a landmark case interpreting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).*

Key Facts:

- *The case involved two women, **Lois Curtis** and **Elaine Wilson**, with mental illness and developmental disabilities.*
- *They were voluntarily admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Georgia, but after medical professionals deemed them ready to move to community-based treatment, the state kept them institutionalized for years.*

Supreme Court Ruling:

*The Court ruled that **unjustified segregation of people with disabilities is a form of discrimination** under the ADA.*

Key Principles from the Decision:

1. **Community Integration Mandate:** *People with disabilities have the right to receive services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs.*
2. **States Must Provide Community-Based Services:** *When such services are appropriate, the affected individuals do not oppose it, and community placement can be reasonably accommodated.*
3. **Institutionalization = Discrimination:** *Keeping people in institutions unnecessarily is discriminatory when community alternatives exist.*

Impact:

- *The decision has been a **cornerstone for disability rights**, pushing states to expand access to **home- and community-based services (HCBS)**.*
- *It helped shift long-term care from institutions to more integrated community settings.*

Let me know if you'd like a plain-language summary or details on how the decision impacts specific programs or services.

Change.org petition to End Housing Discrimination Against Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in PA <https://chnng.it/v2WM4ffZLG>

Below are Testimonies from parents of Duke's Delites team members as to what Love Ran Red Foundation and Duke's Delites means to them:

From: Cynthia Weintraub

Subject: Re: Testimonial from David Weintraub

Duke's Delites employment program has been an amazing gift for our David! He, along with his peers' love doing a job they can actually DO, and they do it very well! Beyond making treats each day, it is a real thrill to be in a local store and see the treats David makes, or while driving on the road seeing a billboard, or coming across an ad on the TV or Internet... he thoroughly lights up with pride, as we do as well. The most meaningful and important factor of this entire organization is the plan to create a community for David and his peers to live in as they get older and we do too! All parents worry for the future of their children as we age...it's even more imperative and worrisome for parents of children with special needs. We look forward to all that will be created so we can have peace of mind knowing that David will be living a well-rounded life with a job, friends and a safe & happy place to call home. We are forever grateful to Bill and Cathy Wright for their vision, mission and fortitude to bring it all to life! Because of their efforts and sacrifice...a great LIFE will be possible for everyone involved.

With Our Utmost Appreciation,

Cindy & Matt Weintraub

From: Kate Touzeau

Subject: Testimony

Adam had Down syndrome and his communication skills are on the Lower side to say the least. I wasn't sure if he would ever be able to work independently or with a job coach due to that barrier. My husband happened to be talking to Bill the CEO of the organization and Bill told Rob to bring Adam over to Dukes Delites and that he could work at his pace and that the staff was more than willing to help. I brought Adam into work and the young adults were very friendly and kind. Everyone chatted with each other as they worked and were happy to be there. There were templates that helped all the employees/volunteers cut out the bones and bits and to help with the placement of the cutouts on the trays. I stayed with Adam to assist him, but he learned his tasks and responsibilities quickly. Adam loves going to Dukes, he loves how awesome and engaging Bill is with all his employees/volunteers, he loves having a purpose with responsibilities and he loves his peers. Dukes has given Adam the confidence he needs to become more independent in his responsibilities. He takes his job seriously but at the same time he feels comfortable being himself. His peers are willing to give him a helping hand when they know he's struggling and for these reasons Dukes have become like an extended family to Adam and myself.

Love Ran Red is an organization that is dear to my heart. The organization puts 3 big fundraisers together yearly and all the proceeds are to help build a housing facility for our young adults with intellectual disabilities. This facility that I hope and pray Adam will be able to live at will give me a piece of mind. As a mom of a child with special needs there's always those questions in the back of my mind asking, "what will happen to my kid when my husband and I can't take care of him anymore or if something happens to us." "Where would he go?" "Will he be safe?" All those questions would be answered with this facility that Love Ran Red and all the families are working so hard to build. The house would give Adam a safe place to live with other individuals like himself. He would continue to gain independence, continue working be supervised as he learns new tasks and have a place to call his own.

Kate

Sent from my iPhone

From: Chris and Lisa Allen

Subject: Testimonials

We feel very fortunate to live in an area where we can find employment for our 26-year-old daughter with special needs. Nicole absolutely LOVES going to work at Duke's Delites. She is so happy to be around her peers in a warm and welcoming work environment! We trust and feel so comfortable dropping Nicole off at a place where there is thorough supervision and the tasks expected of her to perform are within her range of skills. She is smiling when she walks through the doors and smiling when she leaves. Duke's Delites is the perfect fit for Nicole, and we couldn't be happier!

We are very hopeful that our daughter, Nicole, will be able to be a part of the housing project that Love Ran Red is working towards constructing soon. It is very important to us, as our family, to know that there will be some type of long-term care provided. Thinking about the future with a child with special needs is never easy. We want her to live as independently as possible, have a purpose, but also be safe and happy.

Chris and Lisa Allen

From: Denise Mickle

Subject: TMickle- Dukes

What Dukes means to me...It's a worthwhile company that gives back. Young adults with all different types of disabilities work together and more importantly it is fun for them - it is like their place home away from home; while working they have fun, they socialize and interact with everyone It is so nice and heartwarming to see that everyone gets along with everyone else. It enables Tyler to feel good about himself, working, being productive and he gets to see the product in addition to giving back to the community. It allows me to work knowing that my son is in a safe working environment and he enjoys what he does and is proud of what he does. He is a strong worker, and it builds up his confidence and self-esteem. He loves his job he looks forward to working every day.

housing...It is important to be able to secure housing for my son when I am no longer able to take care of him or when I am gone. As of now, Tyler basically has nowhere to go when this happens. This worries me whenever I think about it. The thought of him just being placed anywhere in a group home haunts me and Tyler as well. He absolutely does not and will tell you he does not want to go to a group home. Having Dukes' housing would be the answer. It would give us both peace of mind.

Denise Mickle

From: Keith Apgar

Subject: Duke's Delites

Where people of different abilities learn acceptance, teamwork and building relationships. Surrounded by love, encouragement and purpose. We, as a family, observe this firsthand and we are extremely thankful for their program. Everyone involved in Duke's Delites is wonderful.

Love Ran Red foundation is building a future for our children. Attempting to create a living environment for people with autism and other developmental issues. To live with established friends in an area that continues to reinforce family, friendship and community. Knowing all involved in this project allows for Donna and me to know Jordan will be well taken care of.

Keith Apgar

From: Jayne Bartlett

Subject: Testimonials

Working at Duke's Delites has given Eric independence and a sense of purpose. He absolutely loves working at Duke's with his peers and is excited and proud to be a part of such a special team.

My biggest worry is Eric's well-being and happiness after I am no longer able to oversee his daily life. Love Ran Red's mission of providing housing in a group setting is exactly what Eric wants for himself and therefore gives me peace and reassurance that he will live the life he desires. I cannot overstate the importance of Love Ran Red's goal to all of us in the intellectual disability community.

Thank you for your hard work,
Jayne

From: Diane Hyzinski

Subject: Testimonial

What Dukes means to Holly.

Dukes is more than just a place to work for Holly. It is a place where she loves to be and a place where she loves everyone that she spends her day with. It's a place where she feels important and appreciated. Holly will tell you that she loves being a part of the Duke's team. Even when we are on vacation, she will say that she can't wait to go back to work!! That says it all.

What Dukes means to me.

As a mom I just want my children to be happy. To see how happy Holly is to go to work at Dukes is priceless. It's also a place where I know that she is safe and with people who genuinely care about her. I will always be grateful that she has had the opportunity to be a part by of the Dukes team.

What Love Ran Red means to me.

I think it's safe to say that the biggest fear of any parent, and especially one who has a child with special needs, is what will happen to them and who will care for them when we are gone. The Love Ran Red foundation is working hard to help ease that fear. By providing safe housing in a caring environment, it will truly ease the worries that we as special needs parents have for our children. The success of this project is so important not only for my child but for many others like her. It will be an asset to the community and an asset for generations to come.

Thanks

Diane

Sent from my iPhone

Paula Dooley

Testimonial: Duke's

Our 25-year-old son is a proud team member of Duke's Delites. He has 22q deletion syndrome and after he graduated from high school we wondered where he would work and if he could really hold down a job. Being employed at Duke's has given Matthew not only a job, but a sense of community, a sense of pride and a feeling of belonging. He proudly gets up every day and goes to work, he is a hard worker and a great employee. He is surrounded by adults who are just like him, and he finally has friends he can do things with outside of work. As a parent all you want is for your kids to be happy and working for Duke's has made our son very happy!

Paula Dooley