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The Arc of Pennsylvania is affiliated with The Arc of the United States and 33 local chapters of The Arc across PA.

October 25, 2019

To: Members of the Pennsylvania Senate

RE: Vote No on Senate Bill 906 and House Bill 1918

We are writing to ask you to VOTE NO on Senate Bill 906 and House Bill 1918. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right to live within their own communities and not be restricted to a segregated life.

State institutions have been closing over the past several decades under both Republican and Democratic governors. It is now time for our current administration to move away from a segregated, state-center model of support to one that invests in the aspirations of people with disabilities - the aspirations we all have - of living in our own home in a typical neighborhood, having control over our own life, taking a walk in the neighborhood, getting a job, going to church or synagogue, and having real friends - other than just those who are paid to provide care and support. All individuals with disabilities deserve the opportunity to experience life in the community, just like anyone else.

The closure of the Hamburg Center in 2018 illustrates the successful model of a person-centered approach. There are countless stories of former Hamburg residents who are now thriving and enjoying their life in the community. The opportunity to choose where they would like to live, who they would like to live with, and what they do throughout their day allows individuals a freedom denied to them under the segregated, state-center system. The community has the capacity to integrate the 303 individuals who live at Polk and White Haven Center into their local communities and ensure they have a full, thriving life.

We urge you to oppose Senate Bill 906 and House Bill 1918 introduced to halt the closure of Polk and White Haven Centers and place a moratorium on all closures. Many questions remain from members about how DHS arrived at this decision and what the process will be for the closure. This information must be obtained before allowing the legislation to move forward. Please pause and think carefully before you vote on these bills. The 13,000 families waiting years for service in the community need you to make a careful decision that the Commonwealth can afford.

Respectfully,

Sherri Landis, Executive Director of The Arc of Pennsylvania



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