



The Arc of Pennsylvania applauds closure of Hamburg State Center

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The Arc of Pennsylvania applauds the Department of Human Services on the historic decision to close Hamburg State Center and help current residents transition to community-based living.

“Moving away from a segregated, state-center model of living shows Pennsylvania’s commitment to investing in the lives of people with disabilities,” said Maureen Cronin, Executive Director of The Arc of Pennsylvania. “We’ve seen countless instances of people with disabilities - some of whom lived their entire life in a state center - flourishing when they move into the community. Individuals with disabilities deserve the opportunity to experience life in their community, just like anyone else.”

Many individuals who live in Pennsylvania’s state centers have not had the opportunity to experience life in the community. Experiences that connect people to their community - such as going to a coffee shop, attending a local place of worship, or choosing where and who to live with - are not experiences that individuals living in state centers can routinely access. Their main interactions are with staff and other people with disabilities.

“We appreciate the leadership of Secretary Ted Dallas and Deputy Secretary Nancy Thaler, as well as the immense effort from advocacy groups, that led to this decision,” said Ken Oakes, President of The Arc of Pennsylvania Board. “Inclusive, authentic community living has been a core priority of The Arc since our inception. We know that transition is never easy because we’ve helped people move out of state centers, and we are committed to supporting these individuals and their families in whatever way we can to make this a successful move to community-based living.”

The Arc of Pennsylvania was a plaintiff in the litigation to close Pennhurst and Western State Centers. The Arc of Pennsylvania supports the Department of Human Services’ deliberate approach to this transition, including interviews and planning meetings with individuals and their families, which will ensure individuals are fully informed about their choices and rights.