

Taking the MR out of MRDD

Ohio is one of only seven states that still utilizes the term "mental retardation" in an official capacity. Those states are using the term "intellectual disabilities" instead of "mental retardation." Ten Ohio counties (Athens, Belmont, Delaware, Fulton, Harrison, Henry, Noble, Pike, Union and Washington counties) have all eliminated the term "mental retardation" from their names. Butler County would like to join them and become the Butler County Board of Developmental Disabilities. However, in order to be allowed to legally change the organization's name, legislation must first be passed.

In August, the Board passed a resolution of support to remove the term "mental retardation" from its name. Currently seven other counties are considering dropping the term too. The definition of a "developmental disability" includes individuals who function in the range of mental retardation and therefore the use of the term "mental retardation" in our name is redundant. The term has become to be perceived as a very negative and socially degrading term both socially and in various public media.

The Butler County Board believes that people with developmental disabilities should be represented to the public in a respectable way. People with developmental disabilities and their families openly reject the term "mental retardation" because it conveys devaluation and degradation to them.

In September, House Representative Jimmy Stewart from Athens County introduced bipartisan legislation to remove the words from our name. The timeframe for passing the legislation could

be lengthy, however, this is the first step in the right direction.

The bill was assigned to a committee and that committee will hold hearings. Most likely those hearings would occur after the general election in November. Once the legislation is passed we can legally change our name.

What the self-advocates are saying about it:



JAMES FRASHER

Other states have done it already. Taking the MR out is about making sure all the people who are supported by the Board are treated with respect. It's like being called a bad name, and it doesn't need to be a part of the way business gets done every day."



JAMES HENRIE

"It's very important to take the MR out of MRDD because people are being ignorant and using it more and more everyday to call us retarded. That's uncalled for. No matter what, we all are human beings and we all need to act like human beings and treat everyone with more respect. Everyone on the face of this earth is a child of God. I go out in public and sometimes I hear people talk behind my back and call me retarded, but you know what I do, I smile and say in my head 'you don't know me, you don't know all I've been a part of, or all of the jobs I have had, or how hard I work every day!'"

What can you do to help?

Write to our state legislators and tell them that the name change is important. You may write to:

Representative Jimmy Stewart

77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Jon Husted

Speaker of the House
77 S. High Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Courtney E. Combs

77 S. High Street, 12th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Shawn Webster

77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative William Coley

77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Shannon Jones

77 S. High Street, 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Barbara Sears

77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Edna Brown

77 S. High Street, 10th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Representative Barbara Boyd

77 S. High Street, 10th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Our Mission: supporting individuals to successfully live, work and learn in their community.