

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Adam Gomez, Senate Chair  
The Honorable Michael J. Finn, House Chair  
Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities  
Massachusetts State House  
Boston, MA 02133

Re: Written Testimony on S 124 and H 272 – Supported Decision-Making

Dear Chairs Gomez and Finn and Members of the Committee:

I am Cory. When Supported Decision-Making was mentioned to me, I liked the idea because it fit perfectly within my life goals to start making my own decisions and choices. I have always been able to make my own choices. However, my mom and dad have been my guardians through most of my life.

When Nonotuck and CPR came to my house to explain about The SDM Pilot Project, I liked the idea that my sister could be included in my care and help me understand decisions that will come up. She is the primary one that I spend quality time with outside my parents.

I also liked SDM, because my parents could also be a part of my Team. I tend to lean on my mom to help me understand decisions that need to be made when I am at home and in the community. My dad is also there to extend his help as well.

On Nov 17, 2015 (my Mom's Birthday), I was the first person in Massachusetts to have my guardianship relinquished for the Supported Decision-Making Model. This moment was very special, because I felt my own freedom for the first time.

Since I have started SDM, I have made some big decisions with my team. I made the decision to travel with friends to California. This was huge decision for me, because I am not a big traveler. However, my friend Maggy approached me on the idea of seeing the sets of my favorite TV Show, Pretty Little Liars, at Warner Brothers Studios, and I could not resist. My SDM team helped me understand the full trip and the decision I was about to make. After a long conversation and going over the pros and the cons of the trip, I decided to take the chance and go to California. This was the Best Trip of my Life!

After a year of having SDM, I made another huge decision in my life. My Service Coordinator let me know that there were apartments available in Pittsfield for independent living. My co-worker at the Hudson News lived in one of these apartments. I then met with my parents to get help with making this big decision I was interested in. They helped me learn the Pros and Cons and gave me the big picture of what my life would be like if I made this decision, such as

limited money, working more hours, and independently doing laundry and cooking. I wanted this experience, and I took the risk. In Feb 2017, I moved out of my parents home into my first apartment. I was Very Excited!

This experience was a great learning experience for me because I learned a lot about myself. It was hard to live on my own, because it was hard living with a roommate, living with drama in the apartment complex, and just being on my own. I moved back with my parents after two months, and I have started to work on new goals for independence.

Since then, I have had the opportunity to try different living arrangements, such as Shared Living and Independent Living without roommates and things have gone pretty well. I now live in an apartment by myself above my caregiver who I had in Shared living. We share a duplex. I love it.

Due to my anxiety, I was nervous about seeking employment. My Service Coordinator mentioned that there was an opening once a week for three hours to put magazines out in local stores. It was in local stores, so I kind of liked the idea. I went to my mom and asked her many questions about how I am going to get there, what are the expectations, will I get lunch. After discussing all my questions with my SDM team, I decided to give it a try. I started working 3 hours a week for the Hudson News and over the years its grown 20 hours a week through a different employer.

I have also taken more leadership with my medication decisions since I have had SDM in my life and have added more psychiatrist appointments if I felt I needed them.

In closing, Supported Decision Making is really important to me. I love my family and they will always be there to support me.

Sincerely,

Cory Carlotto