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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:

Thank You for your time and support of hearing about how effective Supported Decision-Making (SDM) can be for people with disabilities in Massachusetts.

In 2009, I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet a young woman, Amanda, who arrived at my house on Thanksgiving Eve. Amanda needed a place to stay, so I opened my home to her and our relationship blossomed from the get go. At this time, I was a single mother raising two beautiful children, Malya and Craig, and God had a plan for Amanda's arrival to our family. She fit right in with the family activities and enjoyed going to church, parties, and having family dinners together. As time went by, Amanda needed help finding out where she was going to live. Using her own SDM Model at the time, Amanda reached out to her friend Maggy and confided in her and had a one-to-one discussion about her options. Amanda was very happy with my family and our friends, and she decided to stay. Being asked to be Amanda's Caregiver was TRULY the Best Decision I have ever made in my life. Amanda has opened my eyes and my children's, too, so much. She helped my children learn more on how to respect and help people with disabilities. She is the Core of our family. Our relationship blossomed so much that I asked her to be a Brides Maid in my wedding.

In 2014, when Amanda was asked about Supported Decision-Making, In my opinion, I thought of her future and this would be the Best Model for Amanda to choose, because it would secure her rights and choices. Amanda knows who is in her life and who she trusts. She is also capable of making decisions. However Amanda tends to need moral support from her SDM Team, one-on-one discussions, conversations going over the pros and cons and getting info on the big picture of the decision. When Amanda met with Nonotuck and CPR about SDM, I was happy she chose to join the pilot because she made an awesome choice for her future and a decision to secure her skills.

Since Amanda signed her SDM Agreement, she has flourished in trying to achieve her big dreams and work on her independence. She has consulted with her SDM Team on some major decisions, such as her banking, relationships, health and best of all living her dreams to travel.

During the Covid19 pandemic, Amanda has had some health scares, during which she leaned on members of her SDM Team to help her understand at her level what the doctors were saying about blood clots and cervical myelopathy. Amanda and I had a one-on-one discussion about what the doctor was saying. Amanda did go and speak to her mom who is another person on her SDM Team about what was happening. Amanda was told the pros and cons with having surgery and not having surgery, and Amanda independently made her decision to move forward.

After surgery, Amanda's mobility skills changed, and she had to make a decision about her current employment with Steinner Films through Arcadia Employment. Amanda was told that, due to her current status with her mobility and the doctor unable to clear her, she was unable to come back to her position. DDS mentioned to Amanda that there is an opening at Baroco day services and that she could look at the program if she would like. Amanda was having many emotional struggles with this decision, because she wanted to go back to work. However, on her own, she had to come to reason that she couldn't at this time. We had a discussion on the big picture of things and what the program would be like versus staying home all day. Amanda decided to move forward with going for a tour. It was so emotional for her, because she really loved working. She did enjoy seeing familiar faces at the Baroco program, and she tried it for a few days. She then leaned on her SDM Team for support and Amanda made the decision to pursue Baroco until she can gain her mobility back to 100 percent.

Supported Decision making has allowed Amanda to keep her voice and make her own choices in life. Amanda has definitely grown using the SDM Model and has made some huge decisions. I am in support of the bills for SDM, S 124 and H 272. Please move forward to implement these bills to help the rights of people with disabilities in Massachusetts. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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