GOOD AFTERNOON. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO ALLOW ME TO TESTIFY BEFORE YOU TODAY. MY NAME IS RYAN HORRIGAN AND I AM TESTIFYING BEFORE YOU TO EXPLAIN WHY I BELIEVE SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING IS SO IMPORTANT TO ME.

I AM 30 YEARS OLD AND HAVE A DIAGNOSIS OF AUTISM. MY BRAIN IS WIRED DIFFERENTLY. SOMETIMES I LIKE TO REPEAT THOUGHTS, ESPECIALLY IF I'M NERVOUS AND ANXIOUS. THIS IS SOOTHING TO ME. I ALSO LIKE CERTAIN TOPICS, LIKE NAMES AND CARTOONS. THIS GIVES ME ORDER AND PREDICTABILITY IN MY WORLD.

I PRESENTLY LIVE IN AN APARTMENT IN SALEM AND HAVE ASSISTANCE WITH BUDGETING, GROCERY SHOPPING AND ORGANIZING MYSELF. I HAVE 2 JOBS – I WORK 1 DAY A WEEK AT PROJECT CHILLD IN PEABODY. THIS IS AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY CLINIC. I CLEAN THE EQUIPMENT AND SOMETIMES ASSIST WITH CLIENTS. I WORK 3 DAYS A WEEK AT CAMP FIRE. THIS IS AN AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM IN SALEM. I DO ACTIVITIES WITH THE CHILDREN.

I LIVE A FULFILLED LIFE AND DO ACTIVITIES WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY. I ALSO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL OLYMPICS AND RUN MANY RACES.

I AM MY OWN GUARDIAN. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANTTO ME. I HAVE WORKED HARD MOST OF MY LIFE TO BE AS INDEPENDENT AS IS POSSIBLE. I WANT TO MAINTAIN MY DIGNITY AND RIGHTS. I RECOGNIZE THAT I NEED ASSISTANCE WITH SOME DECISIONS SUCH AS FINANCIAL AND HEALTH ISSUES. I VERY MUCH WANT AND DESERVE TO BE INVOLVED IN THOSE DECISIONS.

IF THIS BILL BECOMES LAW, I WANT TO BUILD A SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING TEAM. THE TEAM WOULD INCLUDE TRUSTED INDIVIDUALS AND MY PARENTS. WE WILL ALL HAVE PEACE OF MIND FOR MY FUTURE. AS MY PARENTS GET OLDER, THIS IS A MAJOR CONCERN FOR ME AND MY FAMILY.

I WILL NEED THIS TYPE OF SUPPORT THROUGHOUT MY LIFE. NATURALLY, I AM FEARFUL OF LOSING MY PARENTS. I WOULD FEEL MORE AT EASE IF I KNEW A TEAM OF TRUSTED SUPPORTERS WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO HELP ME WHEN NECESSARY. I WANT TO DO WELL. BUT I WANT TO BE THE ONE MAKING DECISIONS FOR MYSELF.

I RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT YOU PASS THIS LEGISLATION TO HELP PEOPLE LIKE ME NAVIGATE THE WORLD AND FEEL THAT OUR BASIC RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE.