

SB868 The Self-Direction Act
Joseph Lindemon
Favorable with amendments

Joseph Lindemon
22 Brian Daniel Ct.
Reisterstown, Md. 21136

Legislative District 10

The Honorable Delores Kelly
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Md. 21401

Dear Senator Kelly,

I am writing you today in reference to House Bill 1020 – SB 868 **the Self-Directed Service Act**. There is no bill that I can think of that better represents President Biden’s desire for us all to “Build Back Better.” Here is a rare opportunity to restore services to the control of the adults in DDA’s self-direction option, without costing the state any additional funding. I am a 40-year special educator in the state of Maryland, in addition to being a proud parent of the 29-year-old adult son with Autism. In my 40 years I have seen many attempts to support the developmentally disabled community, but self-direction is the only program where the participant has control over decisions affecting their day-to-day life. In the last several years that control has been eroded by decisions beyond the control of the disabled community. This bill, **House Bill 1020 – SB 868**, will restore autonomy to Self-Direction Services and provide the greatest possibility for equitable outcomes for the clients it serves.

My son Dylan Lindemon is a primary example of why self-directed services are a viable life choice for so many adults with neurological challenges. Because of a birth injury, he lives in a constant state of anxiety that sometimes results in rage episodes that causes him to self-injury and be aggressive. Dylan’s psychiatrist has diagnosed him with Intermittent Explosive Disorder which causes him to overreact to small inconveniences or annoyances. His psychiatrist equates his behavior to the road rage adult on our highways today. Dylan also suffers from a severe speech and language disorder. While he understands nearly every word he hears, he lacks expressive speech. We believe that the frustration this causes him compounds his Intermittent Explosive Disorder.

I cannot describe how difficult life with Dylan can be, but I can tell you that self-direction has enabled him to grow and given us hope. Were Dylan enrolled with a traditional provider; I believe their emphasis would be on containing his behavior and minimizing risk. He would likely spend his days languishing in a very restrictive setting. Self-Direction has empowered us to work towards real solutions. We have learned that Dylan copes best in an environment that

allow for flexibility, choices, clear expectations, and consistent adult support. In self-direction we are able to provide Dylan with an environment that minimizes the outbursts and allows him to safely participate in his community. We have also discovered a remarkable communication program, known as Spelling 2 Communicate (S2C) that enables people with autism to use a spelling board to express themselves. I now know that I have a remarkable intelligent and observant son who has so many feelings and opinions to share. I know this because he is able to spell those thoughts about himself to me.

To support Dylan we have assembled an extensive team, including his psychiatrist, his language consultant, a board certified behavior analyst, his support broker, his coordinator of community services, and his self-directed staff members. We have learned how to implement his S2C communication program and hope to teach his employees to use it as well. For us and for people like Dylan there are no magic bullets. We have plenty of bad days, and progress is slow and intermittent. But self-direction has helped Dylan begin to realize his personal potential.

The Self-Directed Services Act will ensure that Dylan retains the ability to self-direct and can continue to access and customize available DDA resources to promote growth and to meet his specific needs. It is my goal, as I'm sure it is with you, that we do all we can to help our children achieve a successful adult life. Please help me fulfill this dream for my son and the many other sons and daughters receiving self-direction services.

I am asking you to vote in the affirmative for **Bill 1020 – SB 868**.

Thank you for your time and May God bless you.

Sincerely Joseph Lindemon