

February 12, 2021

In Support of SB441

To the Maryland Senate Finance Committee:

I am writing today to encourage your support of SB441 – The Self Direction Act.

Self-Direction has been a game changer in my daughter's life. For several years after she was first approved for DDA services she languished in programs that could not meet her needs. My daughter is autistic and has very specific interests and talents. As the saying goes – if you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism as each one has their own unique talents and gifts. This goes for everyone in life not just people with disabilities. So instead of placing people with disabilities into "programs" thinking that is the best way to meet their needs, the better idea is to allow each individual to choose their own path in life.


In my daughter's case, when she was first approved for DDA services we chose a service provider because we were unaware of Self-Direction. As I stated above, over three years this service provider would contact my daughter by letter and introduce the direct support person who would work with her. Over that three-year period, she only met one of them because their turnover rate was so high. She never participated in any programs because they had no programs to meet her needs. They kept promising year after year but never delivered. Contrast that to Self-Direction over the past 4 years with me, her mother, as her direct support person, my daughter has – Graduated Community College with an AA in Applied Science, started her own "cottage farm" baking business, volunteers at our local library and is training to participate in 5k's this year.

My daughter is now in charge of her life and is no longer dependent on some program that may or may not take place. She is the driving force of her Self-Direction plan and is loving every minute of it. I serve as her support person and am with her every step of the way. As a mother, it is imperative to me, that she is successful. This is what all parents want for their children and Self-Direction provides that for the families with I/DD individuals in their lives.

On a separate but equally important note, Support Brokers play a crucial role in Self-Direction plans. While families and caregivers are providing the direct support, Support Brokers are in the background making sure the administrative piece of the plan is working, rules are being followed, and timecards are submitted promptly. In fact, our Support Broker has worked on my behalf several times when my pay was incorrect from the FMS.

I hope my letter today helps you understand the importance of Self-Direction for Families and that you will support SB441.

Thank You,


Jackie Davis