

Sunny Cefaratti—Testimony in Support of the Self-Direction Act-- SB441

My name is Sunny Cefaratti. I am totally blind and autistic. I am also the cofounder of The Musical Autist, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping autistic people share the joy of music. As a Troupe leader at the Musical Autist, I mentor others on the Spectrum, and we work together to create sensory friendly concerts for people of all abilities. In addition to mentoring, I also speak out for people with disabilities by serving on the Boards of the Self-Directed Advocacy Network and on the Developmental Disabilities Council. I am also studying entrepreneurship at Anne Arundel Community College so that I can start my own public speaking and music performance business.

But my life was not always as rich as it is today. After graduating from Maryland School for the Blind in 2007, I was placed in a sheltered workshop-- where my most challenging activity was assembling mass mailings. On some days there was nothing at all for me to do. I remained at the workshop for eight long years before Self Direction changed my life.

I give credit to My Support Broker CJ Shiloh who helped me transition to self-direction in 2015. Without CJ's help and guidance, I might never have found self-direction at all. I believe that support brokers are essential for many people in all phases of the program—not just as a human resource

consultant. And that's one reason why I support the SB441. Through self-direction I have developed my gifts-- and I am now sharing those gifts with others on the spectrum. What a wonderful thing!

The Self-Direction Act will make it possible for other people like me to develop their talents by restoring choices that have been withdrawn and by building an accountable DDA.