

Cheryl Chafos

Parent in favor of HB 726

Good afternoon. My name is Cheryl Chafos. My husband served in the US. Army on active duty for 30 years and is a retired colonel of military intelligence. We have four boys. One of our boys, Zachary, had autism and passed away unexpectedly in August 2021 at the age of 19 at Sheppard Pratt Hospital. Zachary was on the autism waiver when we first moved to Maryland in the summer of 2003, shortly after he was diagnosed. Because we moved with the Army to Texas in 2013, Zachary was removed from the Autism Waiver. Even though we moved back to Fort Meade, Maryland in the summer of 2015, we never came off the waitlist nor was Zachary able to utilize any funding provided under the Autism Waiver. Although we lived in Maryland from 2003 to 2013 and again from 2015 until Zachary's death, we never attained access to this support.

I am asking the House members to overwhelmingly approve this Bill so one of our most vulnerable populations—autistic children of military parents—do not have to suffer and lose services due to their parents' service to our country. Please honor Zachary and help others through your support of this legislation.