

HB677 Testimony

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of my stepson Ian Wetherington and all vulnerable adults.

From the inception of Ian being placed in residential care he has encountered various forms of abuse from agencies claiming to specialize in individuals with Autism. He has been slapped, pinched and punched which has resulted in a plethora of bruises and even more recently a diagnosis of cauliflower ear. The negligence from the agencies had him sleeping on a saturated mattress with wet bedding. He was barred from making phone calls to family members, and quite often stayed in his room with the door closed. They never socialized him in the community.

If the abuse was not bad enough, the process after was just as bad. It is not hard to fight for your loved one, but when your met with opposition at every level it is very frustrating. We were told that Ian would need to testify for himself and well we all know how that would go. Vulnerable adults are very easily swayed and have trouble articulating correct responses. This does not mean they are lying, but if questions are asked the responses can be easily manipulated. The agencies always defend their staff and not the client. They do not want to admit guilt. They even went as far as suggesting Ian fill out a form stating that he lies. Who does that? if not trying to hide something. The second agency when questioned with abuse permanently removed Ian from his residence not giving us ample time to find him new housing. Thank God they did though, or we never would have found his forever home with his current agency.

Ian not only loves all his staff, but he is thriving at home and in the community. There have been no incidents in 2 years. He does not say anything negative about them!!! He also has a wonderful Day program in which he is involved.

HB677 is crucial to not only Ian but to vulnerable people (elderly, daycare, special needs) These people need to have a voice either directly from themselves or from people that can represent them. Bruises can heal but scars live on in Ian's memory. He will still ask if those people are going to hurt him and other than loving on him there is no way, we can completely re-assure him. Had we been able to pursue and prosecute the guilty at

least justice would have been served and Ian could potentially move past it.

I ask that you please look favorably upon this bill so going forward people will not have to suffer the way my stepson did.

Thank you for your time...

Bertha Wetherington