

**Terry Larson
Proponent for HB 2343**

**Senate Public Health & Welfare Committee
January 17, 2018**

Madame Chair & Members of the Committee:

Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 2343. My name is Terry Larson. For 10 years, I was employed as a statewide advocate for issues affecting persons with serious mental illnesses. Then I was employed for another 10 plus years as an outreach mental health case manager here in Topeka. For the past several years I have been involved in volunteer activities that have included advocacy & service related to mental health & addiction recovery. I am currently president of Topeka's Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance & a member of the Protection & Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness advisory board to the Disability Rights Center. The core of my advocacy efforts: people with mental illnesses are people first, nothing more, nothing less.

The issue of organ transplants has become very personal to me. I have Bipolar II & general anxiety disorders. I also have Type I insulin-dependent diabetes & kidney failure. In late 2011, I slid into stage 4 kidney failure which qualified me to begin the process of transplant eligibility. Among the qualifying requirements was a battery of psychological tests. I passed them. But, what if I hadn't? Would that mean that my body was any less in need of a new kidney? I also know from experience that kidney failure can cause psychosis. It is chilling for me to think of the possibilities that could have occurred that could have denied me that organ I needed the most.

You have heard evidence from several other conferees that research indicates that discrimination has occurred in other places. I encourage you to add Kansas to the list of states that prohibit discrimination based on disability in organ transplants.

Thank you for your attention to this life-saving issue. I urge you to pass this bill.

P.S. One day, I received a call from KU Med Center. My kidneys had improved, so I was no longer eligible for a transplant. I'm a miracle.