

I am writing you today in support of HB 2550 and SB 348. I am a guardian for an individual with an intellectual disability and the CDDO Director at Prairie Ridge CDDO. I met Lee as a case manager when he was 4 years old and he is now 35. When working with individuals with IDD there are people with whom you just click, and Lee and I did just that. When Lee turned 18 and needed a guardian, his mother asked me to be her son's guardian. Lee has a rare genetic condition that requires his diet to be monitored closely. It is imperative that he has consistent, well trained staff to insure this happens. Lee also has a quirky personality and loves Anime, playing video games and reading Harry Potter like stories.

Within my role at the CDDO I know what services are suppose to look like. As a guardian I know the reality. Three times I had to change service providers because Lee wasn't getting the supports he needed. I did this with Lee kicking and screaming. Our relationship became strained, because I was the police rather than a support person in Lee's life. Lee was enmeshed in the fantasy of his stories and games. He couldn't carry on conversations and uncooperative anything that would interfere with his fantasy world.

To be successful working with Lee, you have to have a relationship with him. If you are just there until something better comes along, Lee knows and won't care if you like him. He will be uncooperative, yell, and manipulate because he'd rather eat preferred food, not clean his room or himself and play video games all day. It was stressful going to see Lee knowing I would either be arguing with Lee or frustrated with staff. Rarely would I see the same staff twice. I wanted to have a positive relationship with Lee and with the staff providing his services. But I found myself being the crazy guardian getting on to staff and Lee at every visit.

As CDDO staff I am know with the IDD system and I still struggled with the services Lee receives. Much of the frustration was due to staff turnover. Lee has specific medical concerns that requires staff know his care plan. When there is staff turnover, Lee takes advantage of the gap of staff knowledge. When you have a good staff match, it is life altering for the individual. Lee is a quirky guy and he needs special staff to keep him motivated and engaged. He is currently with a provider that understands his support needs and he has a good life, but this did not overnight or easily. We have worked out a compromise between mine and Lee's expectations. They appreciate his personality and the workforce and somewhat stable. But it will always be an ongoing battle. Anytime there is turnover, Lee will take advantage and we will have to regroup and start over.

It is so important to have stability in the workforce. Good staff take years to develop. It is so important that the staff rates give the opportunity for these types of jobs to be a career.

I ask you to support HB 2550 and SB 348 and improve the quality of people lives with developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kathy Brennon
314 N. Butler
Erie, KS 66733