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Proponent Testimony for HB 2122 – the Supported Decision-Making Agreements Act

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Thank you, Chair Patton and members of the House Judiciary Committee, for affording us the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2122, the Supported Decision-Making Agreements Act.

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. In Kansas, we have two chapters which together serve all 105 counties.

The Kansas Alzheimer's Association is pleased to support HB 2122. Supported Decision-Making is an effective tool for older adults experiencing a decline in memory and cognition. It can be a viable alternative to guardianship or conservatorship. To some extent we all engage in supported decision making. When we seek assistance from our lawyer, accountant or doctor, we are asking that person to be an advisor, helping us to understand the problem, asking the advisor to offer us choices and explain the benefits and risks of all the options, to answer our questions, and eventually to support us, while permitting us to make choices.

The idea behind Supported Decision-Making is not a new concept. However, what is new is employing the main principles to help persons with disabilities, including changes in memory and cognition, maintain control of their lives by working with supporters to understand issues and options, receive guidance and help to make choices and decisions about simple and complex issues.

The Alzheimer's Association views Supported Decision-Making as a helpful aid for Kansans with dementia and their caregivers. If guardianship is not needed at that point, it is good to know that those with the disease will have a tool that will keep their rights intact.