

March 1, 2021

To: Chair Williams and Members of the Oregon House Committee on Human Services

From: Zoe Allen- Lewis, Portland, OR

Re: Supported Decision Making and HB2015

Chair Williams and Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon, my name is Zoe Allen-Lewis. I live in Portland, Oregon.

Today I am here to talk to you about making decisions with support.

I am a person with a disability. I have a lot of goals and dreams.

Many people help me in many different ways to get to my goals and dreams.

I need help sometimes, BUT it is very important to me that I get to make my own decisions.

All my life, my family expected me to be responsible and make good choices.

For example, growing up I lead my IEP meetings in school. I made decisions about my school supports and what classes to take.

When you turn 18, you are an adult. And you get to make your own decisions, instead of your parents.

Some people with disabilities get guardians. Having a guardian takes away your right to make decisions on your own.

But when I turned 18, we wanted to keep making some decisions together as a team.

My mom and I wrote down things I might need help with – like decisions about money and doctors.

We wrote it into words I could understand.

We signed it and had a person called a “notary” who stamped it and make it official.

I don't make big decisions and I don't sign things without my mom.

My mom does not make decisions or sign things about me, without me.

It is important to understand all the information before you decide.

It is important to ask questions.

It is important that other people understand what I want.

There are a lot of people -- like my service providers, doctors, and banks -- who all ask me to sign things or make decisions about certain things.

Sometimes they rush me, or give me complicated papers, or ask me about things I don't understand.

I use my agreement to ask people to slow down, give me more time, and make sure that both me and my family understand all of the information, so I can make good decisions.

Sometimes my family and me disagree, and that is okay.

My family knows that I get to make my own choices.

It is MY life and MY choices.

Sometimes I make bad decisions and I learn from them. We all make mistakes.

When people take the time to help me understand, I usually make good decisions.

I think the most important thing to remember is that everyone wants to make their own decisions for themselves, including people with disabilities.

If you can help more people keep their rights to make decisions with support, I think that would be good.

Thank you for listening to me today.