

Submitter: Clarissa McGee  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1197

Good Afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of this Senate Bill 1197 and in support of expanding respite for families and youth. As a single parent to 4 extremely active children with serious mental health challenges such as Schizophrenia and Bipolar. I was constantly in need of help. I did not have family available or able to help, I didn't have friends who could help. I needed people that could understand my children's challenges and offer them a meaningful break from our raucous home life. I worked full time and needed a chance to re-group, to recharge my batteries in order to give them my all. These breaks, even if only for a couple of hours allowed me to hold things together, even if only for a moment. I learned that respite care is a huge breath of fresh air for parents to put their oxygen mask back on and continue moving forward.

As a Family Support Specialist, having supported families in one capacity or another, for over 10 years, I can attest to many many families experiencing very similar circumstances. Considering the systems that we had in place before COVID, and what was being built, it is heartbreaking to see the ground we have lost as a State. We desperately need to expand services (help) that empowers families, not make any cuts to these vital programs. They are as vital as Oxygen.

Thank you.