



# Families Together, Inc.

*Encouraging, Educating and Empowering*

January 17, 2024

Testimony of Tami Allen-Parent and Co-Executive Director, Families Together Inc.

HB 2345

House Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in favor of the Supported Decision Making Agreements Act (HB2345). I am the Co-Executive Director for Families Together, Inc., the Kansas Parent Training and Information Center. We serve families who have a child/youth with special needs ages birth-27. Our mission is to Encourage, Educate, and Empower families and to be effective advocates for their children. As part of the transition process for youth, we support families in finding alternatives to guardianship which can be expensive and emotional for families. Supported Decision Making is a tool to support families to provide decision making assistance while allowing their children to make choices about their lives. Families Together encourages supported decision making as a less restrictive option for families and youth.

I am also the parent of an adult who has used Supported Decision Making all his adult life. We have supported him with his decisions using a process that allows him to choose his team of supporters. His team does not make decisions for or on behalf of him. Instead, Supported Decision Making is used to help consider the pros and cons and options related to decisions. Using this tool gives him the dignity of risk which allows him to make the same mistakes we ALL make and learn from them in the process. We took the time during his growing years to allow him to make choices and be a voice for the life he desired. He has always been a voice for his personal needs and is very vocal about his life choices. It is important to him that his choices are respected and heard. He currently accesses services through the IDD waiver and lives in his own apartment. He uses Supported Decision Making in many areas of his life including financial support, purchasing appliances for his apartment, making donations, surgeries, and even end-of-life decisions for his therapy pets. We feel because of being able to make his own decisions using support, his quality of life as well as his vision for his future has been tremendous. He is an avid advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities and is very active as a voice for Supported Decision Making as an alternative to Guardianship. He feels individuals should have the opportunity for the least restrictive options in all areas of their lives. As a parent of a young man who uses Supported Decision Making, I feel he is happier and is living the life he chooses. He is not a burden to the community but rather an asset to those he meets and the community in which he lives.

Respectfully,  
Tami Allen  
Co-Executive Director, Families Together Inc.  
Parent

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*Serving Parents and Their Sons and Daughters with Disabilities*