Written Testimony in Support of HB 2609
Supported Decision-Making Agreements Act

Submitted by: Christopher Chastain

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Position: Proponent

Committee: House Judiciary Committee

NAMI Kansas is the state's largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by mental illness. We represent thousands of Kansans who live with mental health conditions, as well as family members, caregivers, and advocates who work every day to ensure people have access to dignity, autonomy, and effective supports in their communities.

NAMI Kansas strongly supports HB 2609, the Supported Decision-Making Agreements Act. Supported decision-making (SDM) is a person-centered alternative to guardianship that allows individuals to retain their legal rights while receiving assistance from trusted supporters to understand options, weigh choices, and communicate decisions.

Many individuals living with mental illness experience periods where they may benefit from additional support in making complex decisions related to healthcare, housing, finances, or education. However, these challenges should not automatically result in the loss of fundamental rights through guardianship. HB 2609 provides a balanced framework that promotes independence while ensuring safeguards and clarity for all parties involved.

NAMI Kansas supports this bill because it:

1. Respects individual autonomy and self-determination.
2. Provides a less restrictive alternative to guardianship.
3. Encourages individuals to remain engaged in their own recovery and life planning.
4. Establishes clear standards for supported decision-making agreements.
5. Reduces unnecessary court involvement and associated costs.

Supported decision-making aligns with recovery-oriented and trauma-informed principles that emphasize empowerment, choice, and hope. When individuals are trusted and supported rather than controlled, outcomes improve and communities become stronger.

HB 2609 reflects thoughtful collaboration and addresses concerns previously raised by stakeholders. We appreciate the work of the advisory committee and the Kansas Judicial Council in refining this legislation to ensure it is practical, clear, and protective of all involved.

NAMI Kansas urges the House Judiciary Committee to support HB 2609 and advance this important legislation. This bill represents a meaningful step toward protecting rights, promoting independence, and modernizing how Kansas supports individuals who need assistance with decision-making.

Respectfully submitted,

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