Sabin, Melissa
Proponent for HB 2609
Written Testimony Only
House Committee on Judiciary

Chair Humphries and Members of the Committee,

My name is Melissa Sabin, and I am a parent to a child with 5p- Syndrome. I am submitting written testimony in support of HB 2609, the Supported Decision Making Agreements Act.

As a parent of a child with disabilities, I strongly believe in preserving autonomy, dignity, and self-determination while also ensuring people have the support they need to make informed decisions. Supported decision making reflects how many families already function in practice—by helping someone understand their options, weigh information, and communicate decisions, without taking those decisions away from them.

Too often, families are made to feel that guardianship is the default or only option once a child with disabilities reaches adulthood. While guardianship is an important and necessary tool for some individuals, it is not appropriate for everyone. Supported decision making provides a less restrictive, person-centered alternative that allows individuals to retain their legal rights while identifying trusted supporters to assist them in specific areas of life.

I have seen firsthand how the default use of guardianship can sometimes create incentives that do not align with an individual's best interests. In my own family, a legal process resulted in a professional guardian being appointed rather than a family member, cutting loved ones out of meaningful decision making. That experience made clear how vulnerable individuals and families can become once autonomy is removed and control is transferred into a system that may prioritize efficiency or financial structures over personal relationships.

Supported decision making helps counter those risks by restoring autonomy, transparency, and accountability, while still ensuring individuals receive the support they need.

HB 2609 thoughtfully establishes a clear, legally recognized framework for supported decision making in Kansas. I appreciate that this bill:

- Uses plain language and is accessible to families,
- Works alongside existing tools like guardianship and durable powers of attorney rather than replacing them,
- Provides protections for supporters and third parties acting in good faith, and
- Includes safeguards and consequences for bad actors.

I am also encouraged that this version of the bill reflects recommendations from the Kansas Judicial Council advisory committee. That collaborative process strengthens the bill and increases confidence that it will function effectively in real-world situations.

Supported decision making is about giving people the right tool for their level of need. For many Kansans with disabilities, aging adults, or individuals with brain injuries or mental health needs, this approach can mean the difference between being included in decisions about their own lives—or being excluded from them.

I respectfully urge the committee to support HB 2609 and continue Kansas' progress toward a more inclusive, person-centered disability policy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Sabin

Private Citizen
Parent to child with disabilities
Volunteer with Little Lobbyists