

September 24, 2024

TO: Representative Will Carpenter and Members of the Special Committee on Targeted Case Management

FROM: Dottie Dotson

RE: Written Testimony from Family

My 54-year-old son was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy 54 years ago. He entered day services when he left Shawnee Mission North when he was 21. He enjoyed the workshop very much. He hated missing work and was very proud of his paycheck. His case managers have always suggested and helped implement the best services for Jeff. It was very convenient to have the case managers in the same building as they could check on their clients and make intelligent suggestions. If a problem occurred, they could check on it quickly. It makes sense to have them in the same facility.

He entered the residential program when he turned 30. I felt very comfortable putting him in a residential program operated by JCDS and having the same case manager oversee this part of his needs also. I knew how the agency operated. They were informative, cooperative, compassionate, and devoted to doing the best for my son. The communication between staff, parents and clients is very efficient. It makes perfect sense to have the continuity between services, clients, and case managers. My son and I have been very happy with the services and competency of his case managers.

I am stressed and frustrated with the changes that are taking place and have taken place due to interference by the state or federal government. Jeff enjoyed the workshop. It didn't matter to him how small his paycheck was, he just felt proud to be earning it. However, after COVID, there was no longer a program at the workshop for Jeff and people like him. It was decided that if a person couldn't work for minimum wage, he couldn't work at JCDS. I'm sad for the clients who cannot experience the self esteem of getting a paycheck for piecework. If a parent doesn't like the low wages, he/she can take the person out of the program. Not all disabled people can work at minimum wage level. So, what happens to them? They are either sent to retirement or day services. They sit and watch TV. They could do that in the comfort of their home. It seems like we are going backwards.

Now they want to mess with where case managers should be housed. If it isn't broken, don't mess with it just to please people who sit around and think up things to mess with. Have these people worked for a day or week with these special needs people? Are they parents or family members of these special needs people? Who knows better what is best for their clients than the people who work, live, and help these special people daily. There needs to be continuity.

Not long ago at a meeting with Jeff's staff where I was told Jeff had to have access and responsibility for his money. Jeff has a mental age of around 5. I could not believe the government would dictate what my son needs better than I can do. The other system was better because there was accountability for the money he spent. Not only that, he had to keep it in his room under lock and key. It used to be kept in a locked cabinet controlled by staff with accurate records kept as well.

I've heard of other changes that will take effect. I'm not happy about any of them. No one likes change, but the changes they are making are not best for the special needs people. It is just a matter of government taking control.

Where my son lives or works shouldn't have any bearing on where the case managers are housed. I checked other programs and decided JCDS was the best for Jeff.

Respectfully,

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