

September 26, 2024

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

FROM: Jamie Akers

RE: Written Testimony from Family

Dear Representative Carpenter and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jamie Akers and I'm the sister and Guardian for Brenda Trowbridge. Brenda is a 62-year-old woman with Severe Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities, Epilepsy, Sleep Disturbances, Osteoporosis, Anxiety, Mood Disorder, and Separation Anxiety Disorder.

Brenda has been a long-term recipient of care from the same agency for over 30 years, encompassing Residential, Day Services, and Case Management. The idea of having to transition to a new agency for any of these services feels unnecessary and inconsiderate. The current team has built a cohesive and supportive environment for both my sister and our family.

In terms of her Residential care, Brenda has been with JCDS Residential Services for about 22 years, and the staff know her and our family well. She lives (3 years) in a newly renovated Johnson County Friends Home, which we envisioned as her forever home. Would you want to be uprooted from a place you love, roommates you care about and face unfamiliar staff who lack understanding of your history?

For Day Services, Brenda recently transitioned to a home for these services which she prefers. The Elmore center just wasn't a good environment for her any longer. However, I vividly remember celebrating her remarkable 30-year milestone there. In her current program she is out and about in the community multiple times a week. She visits our mom and contributes by the way of delivering dog toys to non for profits. All with the amazing support of her day staff.

Regarding her Case Management, Brenda has enjoyed relationships with two long-term Case Managers from JCDS, and although she has a new one now, I'm confident they will form a strong bond. Brenda has received this service from the same agency for 32 years. This Case Manager also works closely with me as we continue to and strive for Brenda to be the best version of herself she can.

Currently, Brenda is in a good place and manages well, but she struggles with change. Disruption to her services could lead to severe behavioral challenges, including tantrums and potential self-harm and harm to others. These behaviors once they start

could last for several months and they take a toll on her, her roommates and all who support her. This in turn would cause staff to possibly use drugs to calm her and also cause her anxiety meds to be increased so we could try and balance her out again. This is not something that anyone who cares for Brenda wants to see her go through. Moreover, I think you need to consider the families and guardians of individuals with special needs. The meetings, forms, tasks and finances they manage are already overwhelming. Forcing them to find new agencies is truly absurd.

If changes must be made, please consider the impact on those who are settled and content with their current care. It's unfair to disrupt their lives. Please consider, enforcing this change to only new individuals requiring services and not ones like my sister who have a sense of safety and belonging with her current services.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jamie Akers