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House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Lori Barnes, I am a lifelong Kansan who raised a child with mental health issues. I am testifying in support of HB 2345 to establish Supported Decision-Making as an option for Kansans that have adult children with mental health issues and disabilities.

As a parent that had an adult son with a mental illness, a Supported Decision-Making Agreement would have been beneficial in our journey. Daniel was bi-polar, had major depression and ADHD. Daniel could hold a job for 6-8 weeks at a time then have an episode and would lose his job. He tried hard to be a normal part of society. He went to therapy and took his medication the best he knew how. Daniel was an incredible artist and had a caring soul. Unfortunately, since he was an adult, we had no say in helping him get the proper help he wanted and needed.

Daniel took his own life on July 8, 2021, at the age of 21. We called the CIT (Police Crisis Intervention Team) in three times the two weeks before, visited him and tried to talk him into going and getting help. He told all of us he was fine, which as his mother, I knew he was not. We discussed taking his rights away from him, but that process was pretty much unattainable. I know Daniel would have signed a Supportive Decision-Making Agreement with us which would have allowed us to help him with his mental health care decisions. This tragedy could have been avoided if there was an option available to us.

Mental illness impacts our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; each one of these plays a role in decision-making. To make healthy decisions, we rely on our rational, organized thought processes, balanced emotions, and actions that support our decisions. However, mental illness can interfere and make facing a big life choice overwhelming. A Supportive-Decision Making Agreement lets the individual have someone help them with their decisions, rather than making them for them. An SDA can be a great option, as it promotes individual autonomy and empowerment and helps them to live a meaningful, self-directed life.

There are many families in Kansas that have been or are in the same situation and would truly benefit from a Supportive Decision-Making Agreement. Please consider helping Kansans out by passing and putting in place HB 2345. There are 27 states and the District of Columbia that have some type of Supportive Decision-Making Agreement in place, Kansans deserve to have this Agreement available to them.

Thank you for your support of HB 2345.

Lori A Barnes
Daniel's mom