

House Bill 2745 Transition Task Force to establish a Transition Bill of Rights

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Thank you for this opportunity to listen to the stakeholders of the community when it comes to issues of Transitioning Into Community Services.

My name is Jennifer Smith, I am the parent and legal guardian of Corinne Currier, 24 and Cameron Currier, 23 all of Gardner. Corinne and Cameron attended USD231 School District starting at age 3 in the Early Childhood Program and helped pioneer many of the programs. I should say that I helped push for programs, involvement, inclusion to help create many of the programs in the school today. With that being said Transition starts as early as Elementary School. Creating a path for the child AND the family to know what is going to happen to them, what to start to be prepared for and what training should the parents start to be taking outside the home. Such as understanding advocacy, IEP's, day services, residential services, SSI, guardianship, employment training, life skills, college, what's next for the child- and to never say never because one never knows what the individual can accomplish unless given the opportunity and the skills.

This Bill of Rights that is being discussed is a great path for not only the individual and the parents, but also for the whole IEP team. Meaning the administration of the buildings, the general education teachers and the special education teachers- every person that has contact with that student should know that Bill of Rights as well- and that there is a process for a path and a journey. I had always hoped during my children's IEP meetings that I could create a Menu of Choices. This Menu would be established that would allow the student to pick what they wanted to do to be successful to set up their life not someone telling them what someone thought would make them successful. Actually doing assessments on Corinne and Cameron to find their strengths and build on them to then work towards those strengths to be able to create job skill training modules and locations- we did get those in place Junior and Senior years and then while Cameron was in the 18-21 program which is called TRAILS. Corinne did not go to the 18-21 program she went on to college to Johnson County Community College.

I was very actively involved in the transitioning and assisting in the programs of my children as I was and still am very active in the disability community. I have worked for Autism Speaks, Community Living Organization, Autism Society the Heartland, volunteered countless hours advocating for the autism community and assisting parents with resources and supports. I know these tools and resources to support my children. Many parents do not. Many teachers, schools and special education departments do not. I got many calls and emails from schools and teachers needing resources- I even gave presentations to schools and parents on these topics. This Bill of Rights is a MUST and it is needed- we must not let our loved ones down- we must give them and their parents/guardians the support to know what services and supports are out there to assist them in making the best choices possible that are right for them and the start early to plan the path.

Thank you for your consideration