

Testimony

SB 2345- Human Services Committee

Representative Weisz and Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Sargianna Wutzke and I am the Lead Operations Officer for Community Options, a state wide agency that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities. I am testifying in support of SB 2345.

As a developmental disabilities' provider, we have many individuals who have guardians who oversee the financial, medical, residential, educational, vocational and legal areas of their lives. Over 80% of the individuals we support in our residential programs have guardians. These levels of guardianship range from limited to full in a variety of guardianship areas catered to each individual's needs. I think that a task force for monitoring is needed to ensure accountability for the role of a guardian and to ensure that the individual who receives guardianship is protected.

There is a thorough process in place to appoint a guardian however there is not a detailed process to review guardianship once it is in place. I do not believe that there is the same level of thoroughness in the process to ensure that guardian is still appropriate. Unfortunately, there have been situations that have occurred where guardians have exploited individuals with developmental disabilities. In particular, there has been an increase in cases of financial exploitation of individuals with developmental disabilities by their guardians. For one of our most vulnerable populations, I encourage you to pass SB 2345 assisting in another level of accountability for those making many decisions for those who struggle to make them for themselves.

Sargianna Wutzke