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Senate Human Services Committee-

My name is Ardell R. Nelson, the mother of Craig Glen Nelson who was diagnosed with Autism and started slapping his head at one month of age. As each year of his birth passed, the self-abusive, headbanging escalated to the point he had crack scars in his skull like you would crack an egg to peel it. Because none of the psychotic, sedative pharmaceutical drugs were not replacing the endocannabinoids missing in his brain, his off the wall behaviors were causing irreparable Traumatic Brain Injury which would eventually kill him on September 8, 2019 at the age of 49 ½ years.

Two years ago, I testified as to what life was with an Autistic child and I barely scratched the surface. The subjects of Autism and Medical Marijuana was a learning experience for all of us. The Human Service Committee and the full House and Senate listened and saw the need and added Autism Spectrum Disorder as a “debilitating medical condition.” All parents of Autistic children and I are eternally grateful. It was too late for Craig, but when I get a photo of a ten-year-old boy who is benefiting with the use of medical marijuana so he could have a photo with his grandpa, be calm enough to have lunch with his siblings and sit on a bench by himself for the first time in his life, I find comfort in the fact Craig fulfilled his destiny and went home to his beloved Jesus.

Having an Autistic child is a 24-hour being on patrol schedule to keep them from hurting themselves and others. Sadly, sometimes you just can’t stop it. One time Craig had slammed his head against walls for about 6 days, day and night, four days of which I was there, and he never even knew he was so out of control. Medical Marijuana was in its infancy in other states, but positive results were coming out of the studies but was not available for him at the time.

After the passing of the Medical Marijuana law in 2019, I inquired as to getting him a medical marijuana card and if the staff at Life Skills and Transition Center, Grafton could dispense it. I was told that the staff were not allowed to, and I would have to find someone off campus to give it to him, however times daily he would need a tincture. A registered qualifying patient usually needs 2-4 dose supplements daily, but as with any medication, it is based on each person’s needs.

I realized his life was going to be shortened, but had high hopes, the medical marijuana tincture might prolong the inevitable. The law has become the roadblock as it now reads, only ONE designated caregiver is allowed to dispense medical marijuana for an individual who benefits. In other words, if the caregiver designated was gone, he would not receive his “supplement.”

Under the family umbrella, if mama is the registered designated caregiver and she is not there, daddy cannot give the child the tincture to put him/her back in sync with his/her environment.

Currently, as I understand it, HB 1359 would better serve those whose lives are more normalized with the use of medical marijuana so there are backup caregivers for each registered, qualifying patient.

My son did the unimaginable by riding a train from Jamestown to Fargo between a tanker car and a box car standing on the coupling. Divine Intervention and angels kept him from falling off anywhere along the 100-mile route to be killed or never found. God had a plan for Craig's tumultuous, self-abusive Autistic life to help others and you, as members of the House Human Services Committee were the first step in that "Plan." The 66th Legislative Assembly took the second step in the Devine Plan with the passing the Medical Marijuana Bill to include Autism Spectrum Disorder as a Debilitating Medical Condition. It is changing children's lives.

Today, this House Human Service Committee and the 67th Legislative Assembly can take another step of faith by correcting this flaw that puts registered qualifying patients at risk without sufficient backup registered designated caregivers for those who needed the added assistance.

Increasing the number of registered caregivers will better serve those in need at home, school, Life Skills and Transition Center, hospitals and group homes etc. who could be at a deficit supplement risk.

Therefore, I support HB 1359 and ask for a do pass recommendation.

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