

TESTIMONY supporting s.f.5097

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My experience in the social work field as well as raising two children as a blind parent has given me a unique perspective on the need for this bill. Your help and support are very much needed.

During my time working in the social work field, I have been blessed to have been associated with people who were very willing to learn how I accomplished various tasks as a blind person. When people have the opportunity to work with those of us who are disabled, a broader understanding can be established.

Even so, as a blind parent dealing with people outside of my circle of acquaintances, I have been surprised at the lack of basic knowledge of how blind people handle tasks and responsibilities associated with being a parent. This has caused me to reflect upon this as a trained social worker. How does this affect our ability to interact with disabled parents in general? Although I can't speak to what is a part of the educational requirements today, there was not adequate exposure in my day to how disabled people perform the tasks of life. It is probably not possible to provide the exposure that would guarantee that every one of us who are in this field can put aside our own stereotypes as we deal with people having diverse backgrounds. As a result, I have witnessed decisions made by social workers that I felt were simply incorrect. Yet, the recourse to get a decision corrected, even if successful, takes too long.

I have observed that this also is the case in other professional fields as well. Education does not necessarily guarantee that people, whether they are judges or doctors, will overcome their particular stereotypes unless they have been given the experience to do so. For this reason, we need to have in law guarantees that protect blind and disabled parents as well as their children.

Please help to pass this bill.