

House Human Services Committee
Testimony on Disability Awareness Day
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I am Kristofor Medina from Barre, VT. I am part of a group call Communication Alliance. It is one of the local self-advocacy groups of Green Mountain Self-Advocates. To be able to communicate is a luxury, and it is a right not to be taken for granted. I'm trying to tell you all that without typing – I would be left without a voice.

I have typed since third grade. Many people did not think it was me speaking. I have learned over the years to ignore and persevere. I spent years in the classroom with people that talked with their voice to communicate while I sat alone and typed one paragraph at a time. Typing and communicating are the same. Without typing, people would not know my intelligence. I would work alone on things too easy for my intellect.

I would like to tell you what having autism is like when taking a trip into the community. It can be painful and even assaulting. Yes, assaulting. It seeps into all parts of my sensitive being. People look at you with so much doubt that you have any intelligent thoughts. When in the community, we with autism stand out. I quietly watch all of society believe that we are empty space – what we really are, is full with intelligence.

Having autism and going into the community sounds stressful and quite frankly it is. You are dealing with sounds, lighting, smells, and anxiety from all of these things. Next to anxiety taking over all, automatics set in and

take over. This means my sensory system takes a quick turn and I become overloaded. I want to control the weird, stressed-out, automatic behaviors going all across my nervous system, but that feels nearly impossible.

I am learning what it is like to live at home, worried about what to do when my mom is not there to answer the phone, or work with my autistic ways of needing support to type my hidden thoughts and answer my many annoying questions.

Tedious daily living wears on my nerves, working my anxiety up the ladder, taking me on a roller coaster ride and screaming loud repeated phrases come rolling out. The life of an autistic male living with his mother and has been both interesting and challenging.

I love my family, but living at home with them at my age takes the toll on my self-esteem. Thinking about my life as a grown person with autism plays real problems on my self-esteem. Not having my own house or storage is extremely demoralizing. Talking to peers peaks my state of reality. Wishing someday that I could live alone, but ostracizing the idea of it due to the load of support I live with.

Typing wastes no time. Typing allows my elaborate thoughts to say to the world I always think, I am inside of this body that seems to move around uncontrollably, and real thoughts are told when I type. Stating my desires as a grown man works in my best interest because I am able to get what I need.

Thanking my lovely mother I cannot do enough. She has supported me through thick and thin. It has not been an easy life raising a child, now man with autism, but my mom has done an extraordinary job.

I hope you understand that because my supports are strong right now, I am able to work toward my life's goals. Graduating from the University of Vermont with a degree in English felt amazing but I am ready for my next journey which is finding my dream job as a writer. My mighty typing finger is ready to go. See you all on the typing play grounds.

Kristofor Medina