

February 16, 2022, Human Services Committee Testimony By Hasan Ko

Issues Impacting the Lives of People with Developmental Disabilities Living in Vermont

I am Chad Cleverley. I live in St. Johnsbury, and I get Developmental Services.

Our current system does not meet the federal rules for conflict-free case management. Services coordinators need to be free to get you the services you need instead of just getting services from within their own agencies. If there was conflict free case management that would help me look at my services and help me make sure I am getting the appropriate funding. They would explain the services I qualify for, and make sure I get those services. I also need a neutral person to go to if I am not happy with my services. There is no oversight to make sure I actually get my services fulfilled and to supervise where is that money going. There needs to be accountability when you don't get what you are supposed to get.

We need more housing options. When I left my previous apartment I told NKHS that I wanted a roommate. I did not get a whole lot of suggestions or help to find a roommate. My other option was to move into shared living, and I can't do that because it would be too restrictive. There should be roommate situations for a person like me who does not need lots of assistance and I could be living with someone who may need more assistance.

Being alone makes me depressed.

There is more oversight needed in shared living for adults. What quality of life can we safely say a person has if we don't measure it and enforce the quality standards?

I get concerned for my friends. The rules used by their shared living provider often interfere with a person's freedom and rights as an adult. I know they have weight issues, but they get yelled at for eating junk food. Regardless of living a healthy lifestyle you should not be shunned from activities inside your own home. How is it okay for them to put such restrictions on the person who is an adult? Treat a person fairly regardless of how they want to live their life. I mean they are not doing drugs or anything illegal – just trying to live their life.

It is our opinion that shared living providers get limited supervision from the agencies. Some people are reluctant to speak up. According to conversations, they have been told they need to follow the rules or there is the door.

Thank you for listening to my concerns about conflict-free case management and the need for more residential support options including getting a support from a peer. We also need better inspection of shared living situations. And having a case manager independent of the agency is needed to provide this type of oversight.