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H 210 Testimony to Senate Health and Welfare – April 22, 2021

I am Max Barrows.

I am the Outreach Director for Green Mountain Self-Advocates

I am a person with a disability. I am on the autism spectrum

We support H.210.

Here are just a few of the barriers people with disabilities face accessing healthcare.

1. We often have a hard time understanding information. All of the big words used in the medical field do not make it easy for us to follow along. And often, the information is just shared verbally. I need instructions written down in plain language.
2. We need more training for health care providers on communicating with people with disabilities. When they find out that I am autistic they often make assumptions about what I can and cannot do. This influences what kinds of questions or information they give me. It is well worth the time to directly involve People with disabilities in making decisions about our health. When we are supported to be in control of decisions about our lives, we get better results. We are healthier.
3. It is difficult for us to use programs designed by public health departments because most are not accessible for people with disabilities. Especially for people with intellectual disabilities.
4. Now, I want to share a quote from Kris, a person with a intellectual disability. He gets psychiatric meds from a doctor because he does not have access to a therapist. He said, *“When I show my emotions or tell people how I feel I often just get more meds.”* The

problem is there are not enough therapists with experience working with people with intellectual disabilities. This is something experienced across the state.

In closing, speaking as a Black man who is autistic, I want to thank you for listening and thank you for taking action to eliminate health disparities.