

Brandee's story as told by her sister Vivian McLeod

Self Introduction- Good Morning I am Vivian McLeod, here today to testify on behalf of my sister Brandee McLeod.

Brandee is a 35 year old young lady who is very medically fragile with intellectual disabilities.

Growing up Brandee has been the central focus of our family, mostly due to the ability to have her live at home with her family. She lived at home through the age of 8 with natural supports only. And it truly was a privilege to have her share in all family activities, holidays and special occasions with her loved ones. However, at the age of 8 she had to be placed in an institution because of her increased health care needs and the fact that there was no community supports provided to aide in her twenty-four hour care. While this was a tremendously difficult decision for our family it seemed to be the **only** viable choice in an attempt to sustain her level of care.

Brandee lived in an institutional setting for 5 years, from the age of 8 until 13. During this time we experienced a number of challenges with Brandee's care including frequent hospitalizations . Also as much as we visited and brought her home on occasions Brandee was not thriving well. We felt her sense of isolation and need for family interaction on a continuous basis.

As her care declined in the facility it became increasing clear that institutional living did not promote her health, safety or well being also she was very unhappy there. With that realization and concern for her long term quality of life Brandee returned home absent of needed supports. The family worked feverishly to advocate and put supports in place for Brandee within the home and community.

Brandee has now been back home with her family for 22 years, during the years we have been able to obtain critical supports for her that have allowed her to flourish medically, connect with her family, and both support and be involved in her community. Brandee has friends, she volunteers, she is often found out and about in her community, she votes, and completely enjoys her time with her family and friends. Yes, Brandee has friends and relationships that are valuable to her in her community.

Parallel to the people that once lived in Embreeville, Brandee's life in the community is threatened as well. Current polices around healthcare limit the scope and availability to services needed to sustain her life. With proposed limits on essentials such as medications, durable medical equipment, Dr visits and in home supports the threat of Brandee returning to an institution is looming near. Brandee, her family, her support network and the "system" have invested far too much in attaining a meaningful life to allow it to all be lost.

The inequity of the proposed cuts in healthcare will not effect those living in institutions; only those in community. People in institutions will not be subject to reductions or limits on items such as medications, wheelchairs and other needed equipment.

How ironic that a young lady could proudly leave out of the front door of an institution and live a successful life at home with her family only to have to enter and institution again through the back door

because limits have been imposed to people that resided in the community to meet her care needs once again

Brandee is not alone in these threats, there are many others under this cloud of pending cuts to service.

Please we need to fix this for Brandee and many other's just like her.

I thank you for allowing me to tell Brandee's story. I am proud of her strong will and tenacity. I hope you remember Brandee's story of promise and success as you consider the necessary interventions that allow will her continued success.