

**House Judiciary Committee
HB 529 – Supported Decision-Making
March 9, 2022
Position: Support**

**Submitted by:
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Hello, I'm Brennan Lester from Arbutus, MD. Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of House Bill 529. When I learned about this bill, I knew I had to speak up.

Six years ago, I was in a car accident that put me in a coma for months. When I woke up the doctors told me that I had experienced a severe traumatic brain injury, or TBI. Things would be different, people said. The doctors told my parents that it would be easier to help me recover if they were my legal guardians.

Since I was injured as an adult, I already had all my due rights as a citizen of this republic. I was 22 years old, and in charge of my life – as I should be. When guardianship was granted, I lost agency.

If you haven't lost your rights to guardianship, you probably won't understand the day-to-day impacts. Allow me to explain. At doctor's appointments, nine times out of ten my providers talk only with my guardian. I'm left guessing the appointment's purpose because I've been left out of the entire process, from scheduling through treatment. Because my guardian is uncomfortable with telehealth, I haven't received mental health treatment for 2 years.

Now, imagine if my doctors had told my parents about supported decision-making, and how this tool could help me make good decisions and get any services I may need. Imagine if I had the power to choose who I want to support me. I could actually vote.

What I'm trying to show you is how supported decision-making protects individual agency while establishing a kind of human safety net. Self-determination is fundamentally important, and it's time for the law to reflect that. Thank you for listening. I hope you will support House Bill 529.