



BE THE CHANGE



Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the Disability Commission. My name is Kate Oppe. My State Delegate is Dawn Adams and my State Senator is Ghanzala Hashmi. I am currently in the Partners in Policymaking program.

I am here today to talk to you about the need to remove the restrictions that prohibit parents and guardians of minors in the Commonwealth of Virginia from being paid as personal attendants. The need to make the flexibilities that Appendix K has temporarily provided to families just like my own, a PERMANENT option!

My 11 year old son, Hatch has Down Syndrome, Autism and a Speech Language impairment. Hatch has significant behaviors that not only endanger his life, but the lives of the people that love and care for him the most. These behaviors include: punching, kicking, slapping, biting, pinching, pulling hair out, fracturing the eye socket of a 1:1, breaking doors, windows, dishes, electronics and punching holes in just about every wall in our house.

Between September and March, Hatch had to be picked up from school 83 times because of his behavior. I'm not sure how much sick and personal time you get but as a Special Education Transition Support Specialist in Chesterfield County, I had burned through my leave by mid-January.

We decided as a family that I would resign from my job after 17 years in public education and take advantage of the flexibility that Appendix K was offering because our only other option through Virginia's Medicaid waivers would be to place Hatch in a Group Home. I want to be very clear with you, **WE WANT HATCH AT HOME WITH HIS FAMILY! HATCH WANTS TO BE HOME WITH HIS FAMILY!**



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Per DBHDS' website, the average pay rate for a Tier 2 Group Home is \$187 per day. That is \$68,255 per year. The annual cost to Virginia to allow me to be his personal attendant is \$21,840. This is less than 1/3 of the cost to put him in a group home.

Can you believe that Virginia would rather pay for Hatch to be in a Group Home away from his family costing exponentially more than what I receive if he were to stay with his family? This doesn't seem morally, ethically or fiscally responsible.

You can help! You MUST implore DMAS to amend its waiver applications with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to allow parents and caregivers just like me to be a paid caregiver for their minor child while allowing them to remain in their home with their families making Appendix K a PERMANENT option!

On behalf of my family and the many just like mine, I need your help! Hatch needs your help! We need your help!

I am genuinely grateful for the opportunity that you have provided me to share a small part of my family's story with you today.

I would like to add that we have the support of ARC and are working with a House patron on this measure and have approached a potential Senate patron.

M. Kathryn Oppe

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