Senator Robyn Kennedy, Chair September 9, 2025

Representative Jay Livingstone, Chair

Senator Liz Miranda, Vice Chair

Representative Judith Garcia, Vice Chair

Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities

Massachusetts State House

Boston, MA 02133

**RE: H.261/S.155: An Act relative to supported decision-making agreements for certain adults**

To the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities,

Hello, my name is Amber Pettell, and I am a Citizen Council Member with the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC), where our mission is to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion. I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this afternoon about the importance of empowering adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in making confident and well-informed decisions in their own lives.

In addition to serving on the council I work as peer coordinator for Massachusetts West Region Self Advocacy. In this work I get the honor of supporting others with disabilities as they strive to develop and implement vital skills. Self-advocates practice skills and gather information to help stand up for themselves, such as communication skills, human rights and legal rights, how laws get made, and strategies for creating change in the world.

In self-advocacy we live by the motto, “Nothing about Us Without Us” Every decision is made by our members with the enthusiastic support of my colleagues and I. This means that I get to see decision making skills flourish in real time. I see how positive outcomes lead to increased self-confidence. Even when things don’t go as planned a great deal of learning happens. Not only is it an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and avoid repeating mistakes but I truly believe it is the only way for a person to truly understand the weight of consequences.

This is why I believe in the value of shared decision-making agreements. Through these innovative agreements more people with disabilities will be empowered to have true agency in their own lives. This is an important step as we strive for true equity for every citizen.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amber Pettell