

**Comments on development of a special fund for housing for individuals with mental illness**  
**Clarrisa McGee of Washington County**  
**May 20, 2013**  
**Senate Health Care Committee**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of the creation of a housing development fund.

I am a parent of 6 children, several of them with mental health issues. Two of my children have what is considered to be severe and persistent mental illness. Such labels as bipolar, attention deficit, post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression with psychotic features, and even autism spectrum disorder have been given. My daughter's 1st hospitalization came at the age of 8, when the voices she was hearing, told her to stand in the middle of traffic and get hit by a car. She has since been hospitalized 7 more times in the space of 7 years; 2 of those years were spent in residential treatment. She is now 14 and currently lives in treatment foster care. My son has been hospitalized 4 times and in residential treatment as well as treatment foster care. He is now 13 and living at home. The last 7 years has been a rough and tumultuous time in our lives.

As I look forward to the future, I wonder what kind of lives will they lead? The statistics show that the odds are stacked against them. As parents we are preparing our teenagers to transition out of the home, to get a job, to graduate, to drive, and eventually move out on their own, to one day have a home of their own. That is the dream of every parent, one that most parents will see come to fruition (that and more).

I understand that children like mine will need professional support to be able to accomplish the same thing that others their age will do with ease. They will need that support to become productive members of society. Both of my children are very intelligent, compassionate, and talented in their own unique ways. They have dreams they want to achieve in life that start with their desire to live independently like their peers will. With the stability and help that supported housing provides, they will be able to one day lead productive lives and in all probability, reach out and give back to others just like them.

**House Bill 3332 isn't just about today. We need to be thinking long term. This bill is something that will have an impact on their future.** I am looking forward to their adulthood. I, as every parent, want my children to be a success, whatever that success may look like.