

My name is Harrison Cooper and I would like to provide testimony as to the extremely positive impact that my brother's case manager has had for him and for us as a family. My brother, Spencer, is a man with autism and high support needs. He is nonverbal and has occasional violent, self-injurious behaviors that are incredibly challenging. Spencer lived with my parents until he was 23, but it became clear that my parents could no longer provide him with the care he needed and moreover that he didn't want to live at home anymore. This was a hard decision, made all the harder by the confusing nature of the disability care system. Neither of my parents had graduated high school, and our low socioeconomic status had never put any of us in a position to learn the skills needed to seek out and evaluate care facilities. Without our case manager's compassion and hard work, we never could have done it. She helped us find Spencer a place where he thrived, and for several years we were able to watch him grow and overcome challenges we never thought he could. However, the management at that home eventually changed and, during the pandemic, Spencer began receiving a lower quality of care. Unfortunately, care is an industry and as such, some people's profit motive overcomes their duty of care. When the owner tried to evict Spencer – citing the cost of paying staff to care for him – our case manager helped us through the appeal process and assured us that, due to the eviction moratorium, she could not kick him out. Meanwhile, she helped us to find a new placement for him that allowed him to move out on his timeline, and he is doing much better in his new home. Without our case manager there to advocate for Spencer and to help us understand his rights and navigate the complexities of the system, I have no idea where he would be right now, or what his quality of life would be. Despite our case manager's high caseload, she has moved heaven and earth for our family, and for that I will always be grateful.