

**TESTIMONY FOR HEARING ON
Corporate Foster Care Licensing Moratorium
Health and Human Services Finance Committee, February 9, 2012**

Rep. Jim Abeler / Chair

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Please support HF 1683/SF1412

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the Corporate Foster Care Moratorium.

"Foster care beds, especially for children, are like gold in the disability community."

I am the parent of a thirteen year old boy with severe autism. He currently lives in a group home in Chisholm, Mn on the Iron Range, 4 hours north of my home in Minneapolis. This was the only opening we could find due to the moratorium and no available beds in Hennepin County.

Prior to Chisholm, Seth lived in a for-profit group home in Brooklyn Park that repeatedly had licensing violations and complaints to child protective services. This company refused to provide any programming for the children's disabilities, and kept my son primarily institutionalized in a room watching videos. They felt their responsibility did not extend beyond basic care as is required by the county.

What the foster care moratorium has created is a provider monopoly on beds, allowing for reduced levels of care and programming. They are making money on these homes after all....

The moratorium has taken away my right to advocate for my child's needs. When I asked for autism programming or better quality of food, (Ramon and water was a common meal) I was told if I didn't like the level of services I could place my child elsewhere. But of course there is no elsewhere. I was told there were dozens of children waiting for my son's spot, so if I did not cooperate he was out. I reported licensing violations to do with smeared feces and urine soaked mattresses and my son was demitted from the group home.

We searched for many months and finally found an opening on the Iron Range in Chisholm, Mn. There is no recourse for demission. Providers can demit without any justification. With the moratorium and the extreme scarcity of beds, the group home providers have an unprecedented level of power over their disability clients and the services they provide.

My story is not an isolate case. Please keep in mind that Minnesota is the #1 state for cases of autism per capita, mostly children. A large % are severe and cannot live in the home environment. These children will be entering the system in mass over the next decade with nowhere to go. The repercussions to families are almost unendurable stress levels and a high suicide rate. Something needs to change.....