

Jenna Cole  
Testimony on HB 33  
Supporting the DD Workforce

I hope my disabled child dies before me.

What a disgusting thing to read, right? It's even harder for me to type. In what world would a mother ever wish such a thing? It's every mother's worst nightmare to bury a child; a thing I fully acknowledge comes with a pain I do not fully understand without having lived it. To anyone who has lost a child- I am in no way downplaying your suffering. Please hear me out.

For my Jack, it is the only way I feel I could ever know for certain that my son was taken care of, loved, safe... You see, the pain I imagine I would endure the moment he left this Earth seems unbearable. I can't even think a single second about it hypothetically without welling up with tears, getting a huge knot in my throat, followed by the feeling of hard blows to my stomach over and over again. But, in my world, having to feel that pain daily trumps thinking my son could be hurt everyday without me with him, unable to communicate for help to anyone, with no one there to be his advocate. I would choose to hurt the most unimaginable, indescribable, immense and never-ending hurt from losing him for the rest of my life- over him having to live through something like THIS for a SINGLE day.

There needs to be more attention to the world of people with disabilities and the lack of supports for them and their caregivers. I didn't understand the need fully until it was my world, and maybe that is where you are at. No shame in that. It is hard to grasp a journey you've never been on. Those who know me know my kids are my life. Knowing this, who I am- my words today should show you how serious of a need it is for understanding..education..funding...supports... I am so scared of what is in my son's future without me here to protect him that I am willing to lose him, just to save him from existing in this cruel world alone. It is past time to do better, Ohio.