**Medical Assistance Reform: HF 2438/SF 2284**

My name is Joy Kieffer, I live in Buffalo Minnesota. My 34 year old son, Kevin, suffered a traumatic brain injury during a rugby match in September of 2013.  Before his injury he served in the Army for 10 years with deployments to Kosovo, Iraq and Kuwait.  Today my son, a former sharpshooter in the Army and black belt in Tai Kwon Do is legally blind and unable to walk on his own. Once a world traveler, Kevin travels no farther than the local mall or doctor.

I recently retired as the Director of Special Education for Buffalo school district so that I can help ensure that Kevin achieves his best possible outcomes.   **I am sharing his story because something needs to be done about a system that leaves my son with nothing in order to get the help he needs and gives him no real choices in where he lives.**

This is Kevin’s situation as best I understand from all the Medical Assistance (MA) & other paperwork.He receives $1105.00/month in Social Security Disability Insurance, which he paid into from working and serving his country, along with a $1072.00/month service pension**. Because this income is above the poverty level, Kevin is expected to pay $1,189/month for his health care before Medical Assistance will start paying. This is known as his spend down** to qualify for MA and the Brain Injury Waiver services that help pay for his care in the group home where he lives.

In addition to his spend down, Kevin pays $891/month room and board and is allowed just $97/mo special needs allowance. After paying $12/month in MA co-pays for medication he really has just $85/month. He is left with so little money that he can’t afford a cell phone or fitness center membership so I pay for both with my own limited income.

**I am thankful for the Brain Injury waiver services that help keep him out of a long-term care facility but I am shocked at how low his income and assets need to be to get those services.** If Kevin were to move out of the group home, he would have to spend his Social Security and Veteran’s pension down to $792/mo beginning this July to get the brain injury services he needs. **This leaves Kevin with no choice but to live in a group home. He couldn’t possibly pay food, rent and other basics on $792/month.**

**If the MA spend down limit was raised, allowing Kevin to keep more of his income, he could have more choices beyond living in a nursing home or group home**. Offering Kevin and other people with disabilities real choices aligns with our state’s move toward person-centered planning and the goals of the Olmstead Plan. Please fund MA Reform this session.

*For more information contact Erica Schmiel, MN Brain Injury Alliance at 612-877-7905 or ericas@braininjurymn.org*