

Dear Legislators,

My name is Kathleen Nelson. I live on a farm in Grand Rapids, MN, with my husband, Mike and five children. We've had 12 years of experience trying to access supports for our daughter whose disability was evident by six months old. That process has been stressful and exhausting, to say the least. But that isn't the worst part of our story.

"We are receiving Healthcare Notices back from your address, please let me know what your new address is. Your care will be closed if this is not resolved."

That was the beginning of an email exchange between my son, Tony and an Itasca county eligibility specialist. He had become severely depressed and unable to work and was applying for medical assistance to get mental health care. He was found dead by his girlfriend the following day, Sept 17, 2020. He was 23 years old.

The county worker never told him that he was approved or gave him his MA number. The worker ended the exchange by telling him to call the post office to get the delivery issues resolved.

When I found this email exchange on his computer in the weeks following his death, I was so angry and devastated by that lack of supportive and helpful communication. I knew exactly what kind of discouragement and hopelessness he must have felt because I have felt it so many times through the process of trying to get care for my daughter. So many times, I gave up on asking for help but I wasn't asking for me. And everyday my daughter woke up needing my help and so I would rest and try again.

But my son didn't have that. And now we don't have him.

Please support Accessibility Task Force and Pilot Projects HF1043. We need better options especially for people like me and my son who lose the ability to communicate verbally when in distress.

