

Additional Video Resource: Supported Decision Making and Alternatives to Guardianship

Link: <https://youtu.be/wdGNwk9WrjA>

Audio Description of Video:

Video starts with a close-up of Tyler's feet as he goes up a ramp on his wheelchair to get into a building. The speech he is giving overlays his wheeling through a home and building showcasing his living arrangement – bedroom, living room, hallway, etc. The video showcases him in his home on his laptop. When he talks about a photo of him and his mom when he was 7 years old, he shows the computer screen that shows him as a young boy with glasses in a dress shirt, vest, and tie smiling and posing for a photo with his mom, a young woman with dark hair, wearing a dress and smiling for the camera. Both are white. When Tyler talks about a photo of his dad, he shows the computer screen that shows him as a young boy wearing a blue t-shirt and smiling/laughing with his eyes closed facing his dad. His dad is holding him and kissing his cheek while smiling. The photo is unposed. A collage of family photos shows on the screen after this as well. The video shows close-ups of Tyler speaking to the camera, and alternates between him speaking in his living room to the camera and collages of photos showing Tyler at different ages with family and friends. The video switches from Tyler talking to the camera, to him wheeling onto a ramp, leaving his home, and going into a building where he is speaking to a large room of people – the room that he was seen wheeling into at the start of this video. The room is full of people sitting at round tables who applaud him speaking about his experience. A woman sits next to him and holds a microphone up to his mouth so the room can hear what he has to say.

Transcript:

***** please note: the video on YouTube has automated closed captions that are not 100% accurate. The transcript below has been compared to the video and edited as needed to ensure words are correct.**

My name is Tyler Freeman and I currently live in Charlotte, North Carolina but I am a native of Ashville, North Carolina. I am 27 years old about to be 28. [Music]. I have cerebral palsy. I was born at 28 weeks, three pounds seven ounces. My parents were very supportive, especially my mom. She taught me how to be a fighter; that's where I got my fighting instinct. Oh, here's a cute one of me and my mom that was at my aunt's wedding, so I would have probably have been seven. Me and my mother have been through a lot together, but I wouldn't change it for the world. My mother is my everything. Here's a picture of me and my dad. I think this is Father's day. He was giving me a kiss. Looking back on the pictures from my mother and father, it makes me feel how blessed I was as a child and I'm so thankful for both of them. Well, in 2014 the LME petitioned for guardianship. There was one evaluation that I will never forget. An evaluator, uh, who did a psychological eval, who only saw me for 15 minutes, but yet determined that I needed a legal guardian by that experience. The label of incompetency is huge on a person with disabilities, you know, because we already have enough labels. Early 2021 it got transitioned to the ARC of North Carolina. Those people

were amazing. They supported me in getting my rights restored, and they believed in me. They, you know, they wanted me to be able to make the decisions instead of the guardian, and that's the way it should be. [Music]. When it was restoration day, which was January 24th, a day I will never forget, Johanna Finkelstein who is the Asheville assistant clerk, said "I never thought I would be able to enter this verdict, but after nine years your rights are restored", and I literally just about cried. It was amazing. [Music]. Amazing to feel the power again. And I think that's huge because you feel like when you have a guardian you've you kind of lost your voice. If I would have known my rights as a person that was under guardianship, I would have petitioned it long ago. If I knew that I could ask for a trial budgery or anything like that, I would have done it years ago. It's really about me feeling the confidence again. Some of the decisions that I make on my own are where do I want to live, you know, what do I want to do. I want to have these services or do I want to change up my services. What works for me and what doesn't work for me. Just because I have a physical disability doesn't mean I have to not be able to make my own decisions and that's what I think people don't understand. My hopes and my dreams are to be independent as possible, to work an everyday job, to go out in the community, be a 28-year-old and just be able to live life to the fullest because we're never guaranteed tomorrow. Whether you have an intellectual disability or a mental health disability, that doesn't change who you are. That doesn't define you as a person. That is what it's all about; fighting for people, fighting for people's rights and making a difference. [Applause]. I know what I want in my life, nobody else, but, nobody else knows my life knows but me. I also want to advocate for those people that don't have a voice because who knows how they're being treated. And that today is my mission. My mission is to help other people with Disabilities because we all deserve a voice. You all deserve a voice and that is my mission and my goal for myself and others. [Applause]. [Music].