

Esther's Story

Hi. My name is Esther. I am from Indiana County. I am a person with a developmental disability. For a long time, I had no supports or services. I had a very sad, dangerous life when I was growing up. I did not make good choices for my life. No one helped me learn that there was a better way to live. I was always hungry and afraid, and I felt alone. People around me drank and did drugs. They did not work or do good things in the community.

When I was a teenager I lived with a man who was more than twice as old as me. He abused me and said he would kill me if I left him. I became pregnant and had a beautiful daughter. His parents took her from me after she was born. I did not understand why I could not be with my daughter. She is six years old and she still lives with them. That man is in prison, and so are all his brothers and his nephew. It is not a good family.

One day I was so scared I ran away and asked for help. I still could not get supports and services. I stayed in a shelter for abused women. I waited for a long time for a waiver to pay for the supports and services I needed.

Now I have the supports and services I need to be safe. Now I have a good life. I have a good job. I live with a family who helps me make safe choices. They help me shop for food, cook meals, and go to the doctor with me so I can understand about my health. I go to church and do many things in the community. I get transportation so I can spend time with my daughter.

Now I know it is my right to be a mom and I am fighting for custody. I use the money from my job to pay for an attorney. I volunteer to help other people learn about their rights. I have the supports and services I need for my life. I can have a good life, a safe life now.

Bill S B 850 can change all of the good things in my life. If I lose services I may not be able to see my daughter. If I don't see her, how will she know who her mom is? Who will teach her there is a better way to live than in the bad place she lives now? Who will help her make good choices for her life?

If I lose services I may not be able to stay with the good family I am part of now. If I have to leave, who will help me make choices that are good and safe for me? If I lose services, how can I be part of my community? How can I go to my church? If I lose services, who will help me shop for groceries and cook? How will I eat healthy meals? There are many people like me in Pennsylvania. They count on their supports and services to live a safe life in the community. They have jobs, volunteer, pay bills, and they try to make a good life in their communities.

Bill S B 850 will not help them. They will lose the services they need to live a safe life. It will make more people scared and alone.

There are many, many more people in Pennsylvania who do not have any of the supports and services they need, who are still scared and alone. They do not have the chance to live a safe life. Bill S B 850 will keep them from getting the supports and services they need to live a safe life.

You must decide if it is important for all people in Pennsylvania to live a safe life, a good life. It is important to me.

Thank you,
Esther Kuhn
Mercer County resident