



Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide

1702 Clifton Road Suite 1650
Atlanta, GA 30322
www.spanationwide.org

October 1, 2025

The Honorable Members of the Ohio House
Children and Human Services Committee
Ohio General Assembly
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Proposal Letter: Supported Decision-Making — Support

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN), we write to express our strong support for Senate Bill 35, legislation that recognizes Supported Decision-Making (SDM) as an alternative to guardianship for adults with developmental disabilities in Ohio.

Senate Bill 35 advances a critical principle: that *adults with developmental disabilities are presumed capable of making decisions about their own lives* unless a court determines otherwise. By making SDM into Ohio law, SB 35 protects this autonomy while keeping appropriate safeguards, allowing individuals to receive assistance in understanding or implementing decisions without taking fundamental civil rights.

Historically, guardianship has too often functioned as a one-size-fits-all solution, frequently resulting in an unnecessary removal of decision-making authority. Once guardianship is imposed, it is rarely reversed, even when less restrictive alternatives would suffice. SDM aligns with best practices in disability policy, and crucially, with the intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act to promote independence and self-determination.

Importantly, SB 35 does not eliminate judicial oversight nor does it expose individuals to undue risk. The bill clearly defines Supported Decision-Making as **voluntary**. Additionally, the requirement that the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities develop a standardized SDM plan ensures clarity for all stakeholders relying on these agreements.

States that have formally recognized Supported Decision-Making have seen meaningful improvements in outcomes for adults with disabilities, including increased independence, improved trust between individuals and supporters, and reduced reliance on restrictive legal arrangements.



We respectfully urge the Committee to support Senate Bill 35 and advance this legislation through the Senate. Thank you for your time and your commitment to advancing policies that protect autonomy for Ohioans with developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vishank".

Vishank Panchbhavi, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Kurian".

Ben Kurian, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shayan Saqib".

Shayan Saqib, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Blessan".

Joel Blessan, Executive Director

Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN)

1702 Clifton Road, Suite 1650

Atlanta, GA 30322

contact@spanationwide.org