**From:** Kristy Slusser
**Sent:** Tuesday, June 7, 2022 6:36 PM
**To:** Petit, Rachel N (DPA) and Wilson, Mike (State Sen.) (LRC)
**Subject:** Conversation about Group Homes

Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me per your request I am putting the information down in email format for you in the hopes that we can get it to the right people on the right committees. I have CCed on this email the representative for my son with Protection and Advocacy so that if additional information is needed by legislatures as to how the laws of KY currently exists she can assist with that as I only have general knowledge of the laws as we have experienced them with my son.

My son is Jeremiah Slusser, a 24 yr old with profound developmental and intellectual disabilities. In 2015 when we could no longer care for him in our home we opted to place him in a group home. His first group home was a very successful placement but when staffing and budget became an issue they requested we locate him a new group home. He moved to his second group home in 2018 and while he was generally safe we were not satisfied with the care that was provided. When that particular group home he was living in was closing because the owner had passed and the family was selling the home we opted to look for a different company rather than placing him in a different home with the same company. That is how he came to live in his most recent group home.

Unbeknownst to us we were going from the frying pan to the fire. We were not made aware of the fact that there were already numerous existing complaints on file with DDID for this group home. We were not made aware of the fact that there was an extensive history of one particular resident in that home assaulting other residents and staff. All of these incidents documented in incident reports and on file with DDID. We moved my son in there on August 1, 2021 and by the second week in October he was in crisis after being assaulted by that resident seven times and seeing that resident assault the staff numerous times. It triggered in my son a trauma response similar to that of a domestic violence victim in which Jeremiah's fight or flight response resulted in my son acting out against staff.

Each time my son was assaulted an incident report was filed and a copy went to DDID but no action was taken by them or APS to intervene. Instead of trying to work as a team the group home started their relentless and ongoing campaign to get my son put into an institution and still the state took no action. In the process of these relentless campaigns it became clear that the District Court for the county that his group home was in was more than willing to work with the group home and railroad my son. After running out of options and money to fight the process my son was sent to an institution on March 24, 2022. My son,the victim, ultimately being punished for the group home's mistakes. Currently the group home is still open and operating and has moved a new person into my sons place in that same home with the same resident that assaulted him. They have suffered no consequences for their part in this when they had a duty to protect my son.

Through this entire process I started reaching out to anyone and everyone, looking into every avenue I could in an attempt to get help. What I discovered is that there was nowhere to get help from because the current regulations and laws that are supposed to govern these group homes don't actually exist as you would expect them to.

To help explain the process more I am going to compare and contrast with the way that nursing homes are regulated since both are intended to serve the most vulnerable of our population and both are funded through Medicaid and while nursing homes are paid for from Medicare group homes are paid for using the persons SSI as they have to pay room and board to the group homes.

Nursing homes and group homes both fall under the same Cabinet in Frankfort.

Each year every single nursing home in the state even those owned by the same company are surveyed by OIG state surveyors. Any violations are well documented, require plans of correction, and are made available to the public. Any cases of abuse and or neglect are investigated separately as well as those records are also made available to the public. Those violations result in penalties and can result in closure.  Now I will shock you with how group homes are surveyed. DDID sends one person to a single group home regardless of how many are owned by the group home company, that particular group home typically is cherry picked by the group home themselves and those survey results are not available to the public. Any cases of abuse or neglect are routed to the local APS office that is already overworked and understaffed. DDID has no authority to impose fines or sanctions of any type. The most severe action that can be taken by DDID against a group home is a voluntary moratorium, think about that for a minute, VOLUNTARY moratorium. Going to OIG or even the AG is of no use because all they will do is refer you back to DDID because technically no regulations have been violated and no laws have been broken because the laws in Kentucky don't really exist to protect these residents. It's time that we brought these antiquated laws up to modern times with real effective change.

In many ways Kentucky has surpassed so many states with the Michelle P waiver and the SCL waiver they offer this population yet the laws leave them at the mercy of the group home companies. Many of these residents only have state guardians, they don't have an active and involved family member to advocate for them.

 I'm asking for help making it to where group homes are regulated the same as nursing homes. It may be too late to protect my son from what happened to him but he will eventually go to another group home and I don't want history being allowed to repeat itself. I also don't want your or your friends' sons, daughters, grandchildren, nieces or nephews being subjected to what we have gone through.

Thank you,

Kristy Slusser

--

Kristy Slusser
Defying Gravity
Everyone Deserves The Chance To Fly