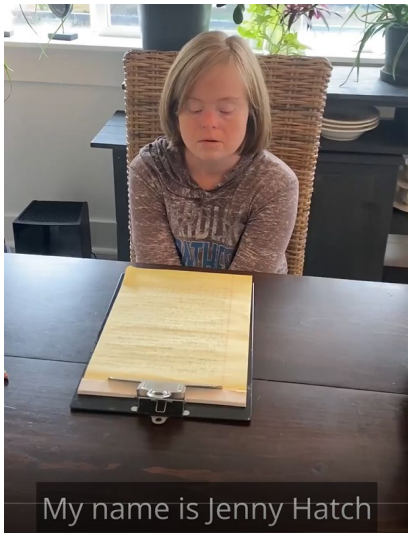
Submitted Written Testimony of Jenny Hatch

Resident of Virginia

For the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution

"Toxic Conservatorships: The Need for Reform" Hearing

September 28, 2021



My name is Jenny Hatch. I am 37 years old, and I have Down syndrome. I was placed in a group home. I did not want to be there. I told everyone that I was not happy and did not like it. I just wanted to live where I felt safe.

Jewish Family Services was my guardians. My caseworker was mean to me. I was not allowed to go to the thrift store to my job at Village Thrift. I was there 14 years [now]. I wasn't allowed to see my friends. I wasn't allowed to use my cell phone and my computer. I felt like a prisoner, but I didn't do anything wrong.

I was told I had rights at the group homes. But that wasn't true. JFS took them away. It was like I didn't exist. JFS took away my choices, my independence. My guardian is supposed to help me reach my goals. Instead, I was kept away from my community, my church, and my friends. I kept telling everyone I was unhappy. But no one listened to me.

I lost a year of my life being forced to stay in a group home and forced to work at a job that I did not want. How is making sure that what happened to me doesn't happen to someone else? Who is making sure JFS is doing the right thing? Just because people have a disability does not mean they need a guardianship. Many times they may just need a little help.

Thank you.

This written testimony is the transcript of submitted video testimony.
For more information about Jenny's story, please visit www.JennyHatchJusticeProject.org