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**GUARDIANSHIP TERMINATED IN FAVOR OF FORMALIZED SUPPORTED DECISION
MAKING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN INDIANA**

RICHMOND – Indiana Disability Rights (IDR) announces the filing of a petition for the termination of guardianship in favor of using formalized Supported Decision Making. The petition states that the Petitioner, Jamie Beck, believes she no longer qualifies as an “Incapacitated Person” as defined by Indiana Code because she is able to effectively and competently manage her affairs by using the supports and services available to her through full-time employment with benefits, and waiver services. With the use of a formalized Supported Decision Making agreement, Jamie will have additional support from a team, chosen by her, to help her with making life’s tough decisions. This is the first time such an agreement has been used in Indiana. Melissa Keyes, IDR Legal Director, and Justin Schrock, IDR Staff Attorney, serve as Jamie’s attorneys on the case. The process and form are part of a pilot project sponsored by a grant from the Administration for Community Living and Indiana’s Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS).

In Indiana, adults under plenary, or total, guardianship do not have the right to make any decisions such as deciding where to live, choosing who to spend time with, consenting to medical treatments, making financial decisions, or choosing to get married. All of those decisions are made by the guardian. In some instances, being under guardianship is considered “civil death” because of the significant removal of independence and rights. Despite the requirement that courts look to less restrictive alternatives to guardianship, there has not been a major effort to use these tools, which includes Supported Decision Making concepts, until now. Supported Decision Making allows adults with disabilities to retain their rights as the ultimate decision maker using a team of supporters. Jamie has used this option to choose her team, determine the areas where she needs support, and decided how she wants help to be given.

“This is a good opportunity for people like me. They get more choices and be able to make more decisions on their own to help them spread their wings and see what they want to do and open the door to new possibilities. It’s endless,” says Jamie.

“Jamie has worked so hard the past 5 years to regain capacity,” says Dan Stewart, President of Achieva Resources, and Jamie’s current guardian. “She requested to go through the Erskine

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Green Training Institute in Muncie to gain the skills to obtain full time employment with benefits which she has accomplished. As her guardian, I can say that she truly had done this on her own with minimal guidance. I am excited that she will be the first person in Indiana to use this Supported Decision Making Agreement.”

“This project marks a shift in the way that Indiana treats adults facing guardianship. There is now another tool for families, attorneys, and courts to try as a way to avoid unnecessary guardianships. While guardianship is sometimes appropriate, it is a significant infringement on a person’s individual rights and should not be entered into lightly. Tools like Supported Decision Making allows someone, like Jamie, to have support in making decisions while still maintaining their independence and decision making authority.” says Melissa Keyes.

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The mission of Indiana Disability Rights is to protect and promote the rights of individuals with disabilities through empowerment and advocacy.