

Patricia Lee Testimony

Good morning, my name is Patricia Lee. I live in North Carolina. I'm here to talk about how the Americans with Disabilities has significantly changed my life. Because of the Americans with Disability Act, I had had an equal opportunity to turn my life around. I have a history of substance abuse and mental health diagnosis. I found myself in a situation where the only housing I could obtain was an Assistive living facility. This was put into place by my doctor because I was going to end up on the streets where I would probably began using again. The doctor probably thought the Assistive living facility would be able to treat my mental health diagnosis, as well as maintain my recovery.

The assisted living facility was very depressing. If you know anything about people who are in recovery, it is very important that we do not become depressed. This makes people more likely to use again. In the facility, I had to eat what and when they told me to. I had to go to bed at a certain time. The only good thing about that place was my mother was in the room next to me. The most depressing aspect was the way I saw the staff treat other people. It was just too much negativity to be around.

I honestly thought that the end result was an assisted living facility for me. A lawsuit found that mental health services in North Carolina were violating the Americans with Disabilities act and not providing needed services for people with mental health diagnosis to successfully in the community. To meet the terms of the lawsuit agreement, NC developed the TCLI program. When I was in the nursing home Eastpointe came in and said 'do you want to live on your own? " I didn't think that was an option for me anymore. Eastpointe helped me get a house that I still live in. They showed me the house and I approved of it. There was a chance that someone else could have gotten the house, so I looked at a duplex as well. Once I moved in the house, I decided to set a goal to get an Emotional Support Animal. That is how I got my dog Lady. I receive mental health services from Stevens Outreach Center, Eastpointe provides transition services, and others that include a therapist, peer support specialist, rental assistance, and any other support needed to help me set, and reach my own goals. My faith has played a large role in my recovery as well. Through my church I have a family who is always there. My faith in Jehovah has helped me persevere. When I was living in the assisted living facility, I received less services for my mental health. There were always appointments that were canceled and never rescheduled while residing at the Adult Care Home (ACH). The appointments were even set beyond my control. So, now I receive all the support I need from Alliance of Disability Advocates of NC and Eastpointe.

I had a goal of paying off my court fees I got when I was not in recovery., and getting my drivers license reinstated. I have been able to pay off the debts completely. When I got one of the last debts paid off, I was suddenly told of a class I needed to take in order to get my drivers license. This was devastating as I had been saving just to pay off the court fees, and now I had to pay \$1000 dollars in order to take the class. Fortunately, it was around the same time that a program called Freedom Funds was available. Freedom funds helped me with this expense. I have completed the class and now I only have to take my test. Freedom Funds came from the community inclusion services program.

This program has enabled me to move out of the facility, and into my own house. I still receive needed services such as counseling, peer support, anything that I need to reach the goals that I set for myself. I have successfully lived independently for 3 years. Through mental health services in the community, I still have the support that empowers me to reach my goals."