

Hello, my name is Annemarie Timling and I live at [REDACTED] in Fairbanks, Alaska, 99709. I am testifying in support of House Bill No. 316, amending AS 09.17.010.

My dad was my safety net.

Like most people, I walked around in the world knowing that if I needed help, my dad would be my first call.

I could call him when my car broke down at 11pm, when it was -40 outside, when the toilet was clogged, or when I had a disagreement with my mom.

His presence and comfort gave me the bravery to go out into the world to try things, to dream of a bigger future, because I knew that he would have my back and would patiently problem-solve with me if things were to go wrong.

When I was 3 years old, my family had learned that I was Hard of Hearing. Which meant that I would be going to a lot of doctors offices, special education meetings, and learning how to navigate the world with hearing loss. As early as I can remember my dad was the designated parent that always accompanied me to all of my hearing-related appointments.

At these appointments he would sit alongside me, taking in the medical and educational jargon. He would try to make sure I understood what was happening and allowed me the time and space to make decisions for myself. He would advocate for me and often sit and ponder with me on what brand of hearing aid I should get, or what color I might pick for my new ear molds, or ask what I thought about the meetings.

When I was 20, facing difficulties at local universities, he went with me to the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation where I tried to convince the rehabilitation counselor to support me in going to Gallaudet University, a university for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. While I had a compelling case, the counselor was hesitant. And it was my dad, who had been quietly sitting next to me as I passionately presented my case, who then uttered to the counselor, “trust me, she is worth it”.

Because of that moment, I managed to get the financial support I needed to go to Gallaudet University. Two months before he lost his life, he watched me joyfully crossing the stage and graduating Summa Cum Laude with Honors.

It was only 8 months after his passing, that I learned that I would be losing my eyesight. A year later, I was diagnosed with an incurable condition called Usher's Syndrome.

And with that, the vision of my life that I had once seen so clearly, crumpled.

My dad's death has irrevocably splintered my support system. My mom and brother try their best to support and show up for me while they, themselves, struggle to navigate the world without my dad. However they can never be the quiet, patient, problem solving presence I had come to know and depend on.

And now I must continue to navigate the world, knowing that now when I call my dad, no one will answer anymore.