

**Testimony in Support of HB2044**  
**Presented to the House Health and Human Services Committee**  
**January 26, 2017**

**JoRita Hill, Member**

Chairman Hawkins, member of the committee, I stared at the same close walls for year after year; friendships fell by the wayside and social skills seemed to disappear. Suicidal ideation and hospitalization occurred again and again in a horrible cycle that I could not seem to break.

I was referred to Breakthrough Club by Amerigroup, Health insurance in 2015 after yet another hospital trip. I wasn't sure about this at first. It took me three months to get to orientation, but by the first few weeks after I started attending Breakthrough, I had begun in earnest the process of coming out of my "timid turtle shell." And this wasn't a slow march of improvement; it was more of an explosive growth, as every day I strengthened my flourishing self-confidence and explored my newborn sense of humor. Breakthrough was there with me every step of the way. I found purpose in meaningful work, becoming Breakthrough's member liaison to the End Dependence Kansas (EDK) Employment Steering Committee, and taking part in Advocacy Day with Breakthrough, where I found my voice and my passion. I learned leadership skills at Breakthrough also: running new member orientations, hosting MHA Compeer @ Breakthrough's Social Hour, and teamwork skills representing Breakthrough on the planning committee for NAMI Wichita's annual Candlelight Ceremony honoring mental illness.

Though I still deal with depression, anxiety, and the rest of my disability, it does not cripple me the way it used to; I have the self-confidence, determination, humor, flexibility, and coping skills I have learned to deal with life on a day-to-day basis, in a productive and realistic way. Breakthrough has literally changed the course of my life, teaching me to reach deep into myself for those skills I did not know I had, and to rediscover and polish those skills that were so rusty I thought I had lost them forever. These skills, this confidence, lets me live my life joyfully, to the best of my ability; this strength lets me stand up and speak to you today.