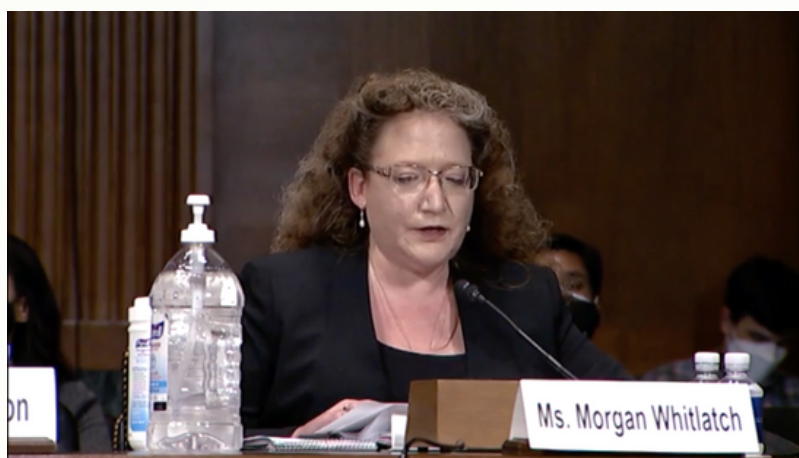


SDM goes to the U.S. Senate

This week the Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on what it called “Toxic Conservatorships: The Need for Reform”, growing largely out of the widely publicized Britney Spears case (in California what we call guardianship in New York, and most other states, is called conservatorship.) As with much of the media frenzy and discussion about that case, a primary issue that the committee wanted addressed was abuse, primarily financial, by conservators.

But, we were delighted to see, the witness list included two lawyers who have been important in promoting SDM as an alternative to guardianship, Morgan Whitlatch from Quality Trust in D.C., and Zoe Brennan-Krohn from the ACLU Disability Rights Project. They both spoke strongly about the need to end the “school to guardianship pipeline” that has been described so well by the National Council on Disabilities, and about the importance of seeing people with disabilities as able to make their own decisions with the support of trusted persons in their lives.



For Morgan and Zoe, and for Nicholas Clouse, a wonderful Decision-Maker from Indiana who had his rights restored and his guardianship terminated, SDM is not only an alternative to guardianship but a way of enhancing the dignity of people with I/DD, and ensuring them the respect they deserve. The Chair of the Committee, Senator Blumenthal of Connecticut responded to concerns about how guardianship treats people like children by contrasting it with how good parents are committed to helping their children become decision-makers, even if the decisions they make aren't always good. As we have said so often, everyone makes bad decisions, and, as he strongly noted, that's the way everyone, including people with I/DD, learn. And, from the other side of the aisle, Senator Ted Cruz of Texas reiterated the importance of everyone's right to make their own decisions.

WE are excited that SDM has become an important part of mainstream discourse, and proud of our continuing leadership role in demonstrating, in the most concrete ways, that it really works!

You can access the video of the hearing [here](#).