

My name is Samantha Snow.

I am 27 years old. When I was in second grade I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. Throughout high school, I was also diagnosed with Bipolar, OCD, PDD, and mild intellectual disability. I received special education services in school and graduated high school in Independence Missouri at 18 and then did an internship with project search for one year. The goal of the project search internship was to get skills to be able to get a job. After the internship, I was not successful at getting a job for three years. During those three years, I struggled with depression and lack of purpose. I didn't have much to look forward to. I wasn't able to pay my own bills or buy things that I wanted. I had to rely on my parents for everything.

In 2017 I got hired at a hotel, Residence Inn. My manager, Angela, was so nice and helped me a lot with learning my job. While working there, I met a lot of friends and felt included with all my co-workers. I worked there for almost three years and during that time, was able to buy things for myself, pay my bills, and be active. I got laid off when COVID hit like a lot of my co-workers and went back to being unemployed.

Then I moved to Kansas with my sister who works at COF. I wasn't able to get a job in the community when I first got here but I started working piece rate in the workshop at COF. I really enjoyed learning the jobs and interacting with my peers. I still wanted an opportunity to work in the community and this year, I was hired at Thriftopia where I make above minimum wage. Working at Thriftopia helps me feel good about myself and I am treated well and respected by everyone I work with. I really like my boss, Craig, and I want to make him proud of me. I love working with people and I am really happy when I am able to help a customer find something in the store. I love every part of my job, even cleaning the bathrooms!

Since moving to Kansas and having both of these jobs, I am able to pay my bills all on my own. I have learned how to coordinate my own transportation, manage my paycheck, get around town riding my bike, and to purchase things on my own at the store. I am still on the waiting list for services in Kansas but because of my support and my job, I am doing well and learning a lot! I want everyone with disabilities in Kansas to have the opportunity to work and learn like I have.

Please pass HB 2219 to increase work opportunities for more people like me.