

Madame chair and members of the
committee, My name is Kathleen Callahan
and I live in Helena.

EXHIBIT 18

DATE Jan. 14, 2005

~~My name is Kathleen Callahan.~~ I am 18 years old and a senior at Helena High School. I am employed at Valley Bank where I work 2 hours a week. I also volunteer at Food Share 2 hours a week. I love going to school and I am a fan of school sports. In my spare time I like to work on my computer, ride my bike, and hangout with my friends.

I was born with Spina Bifida, a birth defect, resulting in multiple disabilities. Although I was too little to remember this my mom tells me that right away our family received a lot of help from Family Outreach. Through their early intervention program I was evaluated by a family support specialist who developed a plan on how I can reach my highest potential. She taught my mom what to look for and expect as I grew up.

I also received help with special adaptive toys and equipment like my adaptive bicycle that I ride in my neighborhood. It helped me learn to be responsible and independent. The family support specialist also told my mom that I needed physical therapy at 7 months and speech therapy at 1 year. Without this early intervention I would not have gotten the headstart that I needed for my later development. Family Outreach told my mom about the public preschool for children with disabilities and helped me to get tested and enrolled. Over the years the family support specialist went to all the school meetings with my mom from preschool through High School. Family Outreach also provided me with habtrainers and jobcoaches when I needed them. Our family does not know what we would have done without their services, and are very thankful. Now that I am 18, I am no longer eligible for Family Outreach services. I am now on the waiting list for adult work services, along with over 700 other young adults with disabilities. Because my disability is milder than some, I may have a long wait.

My dreams for the future are to be independent, to be able to have a job, and to be a productive, taxpaying citizen. I want to do volunteer work, and someday live by myself in an apartment. When I graduate in ~~2000~~ ^{June} 2005, I want to put all the skills I have learned at home, school, and in my jobs to good use. But because I am on the waiting list and am not considered in a crisis, there will probably be no support services for me when I graduate, so I may not be able to do the things I want to do. Please remember when you make decisions about services for people with disabilities you will be affecting people like me. Please remember I can vote.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.