

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL #HB1476

Independent Oversight and Review Board for Health Care of Inmates in State Correctional Facilities-Establishment

Date: February 28, 2020

From: Brenda Younker

To: Chairman Luke Clippinger, Madame Chair Vanessa Atterbeary and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Re: SUPPORT FOR BILL #HB1476

I am a mother of an inmate that has mental and medical issues. Since childhood my son has struggled with AD/HD and depression. He was counseled throughout his school years for developmental disabilities. He now struggles with major depressive disorder and borderline personality disorder.

I would like to share with you some of the personal health care experiences that my son has faced during his incarceration.

My son has a colloid cyst/brain tumor in the third ventricle of his brain. A colloid cyst is a slow-growing tumor typically found near the center of the brain. If large enough, a colloid cyst obstructs cerebrospinal fluid movement, resulting in a buildup of fluid in the ventricles (hydrocephalus) and elevated brain pressure which can cause sudden death. His doctor, prior to incarceration, informed him that he will need 6 months to yearly CT Scans to ensure the tumor is not obstructing fluid movement. My Son was incarcerated in 2016. In 2017, he repeatedly submitted sick call requests concerning follow up on his condition. He never received a response. I repeatedly called the Medical Director, left voice mail messages, and sent certified letters, but never received a response. I then contacted the Dept. of Public Safety & Correctional Services, Inmate Health Services. My Son finally had a CT Scan performed In May 2019.

My Son currently takes two different medications for depression and anxiety and has missed several dosages of his medication because the healthcare providers failed to renew his prescriptions on time.

He has waited over 2 months to use the toe nail clippers. His toe nails were so long they hurt. After stating on the last request that he could use his toe nails as a weapon, he got to use the clippers.

My son has a history of ear wax build up. After numerous requests and a phone call to the medical director he finally received an ear flush. He told me when he walked in the medical unit the healthcare staff made fun of him and called him a whiner. The buildup was so bad he couldn't hear out of his left ear. He ended up with a hole in his ear drum.

In October 2019, one of my Sons tooth fillings fell out. He submitted multiple request and never received a response. He couldn't eat on that side of his mouth because of pain and a nerve showing. I had to repeatedly call the medical dept. to complain. By the time he received a

response, he had an infection and was prescribed an antibiotic. He finally had his tooth filled on February 4, 2020.

A common barrier lies in the public opinions regarding healthcare in prisons that often leans toward underfunding such care out of notion that substandard care is in some way a part of the punishment. We need to change the dialogue between being tough or being soft on crime to being smart about it.

There are legal, ethical, social, and public health reasons why prisoners, as wards of the state, must be supplied with health care. Deprivation of health care constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, a violation of the Eighth Amendment.

Most inmates need clear guidance for submitting requests, and a meaningful and timely review of and response to requests.

I urge you to support HB #1476 so that my son and other inmates can receive the proper healthcare they desperately need.

I am asking for a favorable report for HB #1476

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Younker