

HB576 Testimony

Position: SUPPORT

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My name is Leslie Carpenter and I am urging you to vote for HB576.

After tragedies in which someone with an untreated serious mental illness has killed someone or themselves, there are often outcries of “Where was the Family?” or “Why didn’t they get him treatment?” or “Why didn’t he choose treatment?”

So glad you asked. I can tell you, as the mom of a 33 year old son who lives with a very severe Schizoaffective Disorder, who has been hospitalized 26 times over the past 17 years.

We are doing everything we can to get their loved ones the treatment they need...but meeting barriers at every turn if our loved one is so sick they cannot “volunteer” for treatment.

Sadly, someone with an untreated psychosis often has no ability to recognize that they are sick and need treatment, due to changes in the frontal and parietal lobes of their brains, as part of the brain illness itself. Someone suggesting they take an anti-psychotic

medication sounds as dangerous to them, as someone asking one of us to take Insulin when we don't have Diabetes.

This bill, if passed, would help by allowing for appropriate, collaborative and monitored treatment “in the community” so that the person can be helped beyond the walls of a psychiatric unit in a hospital.

Many people testify against these bills because of traumatic inpatient treatment they have received. I agree with them that trauma happens in hospitals. But these bills are not to get more of that inpatient treatment...they are to limit the need for that by allowing for treatment as outpatients, in the community.

We started Iowa's first AOT program and over the first 8 months of our program, we reduced hospitalizations by 81%, from 129 prior to AOT, to 3 after AOT. We reduced the hospital days by 78% from 699 prior to AOT to 29 after AOT. This was for the 12 patients helped so far.

Please vote for this bill to take the first step to save the lives of people who desperately need this medically necessary treatment. You can restore their HUMAN rights for treatment and sanity!

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Carpenter