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HB 522 (FAV) DJS Rehabilitation Services- Funding

In late 2022, I discovered my daughter, Jordan, had in fact experimenting with drugs after doing my own investigation at my home. This changed the trajectory of my life, but with great challenge. I was a single parent and lacked familial support to help me figure this out. In November 2022, one morning I found my daughter unresponsive and was totally unsure why. It was due to an opioid overdose. I had to perform CPR for the first time on a live person. I had been certified for over 16 years at that point. Jordan was given Narcan and survived. Sadly, she died April 20, 2024.

This experience led me to learn more about the services that were offered in my area and how difficult they were to receive. There are not many places that offer services to children for substance abuse, as there are for adults. I did find a place in Baltimore City and drove my daughter there. While on the phone with the facility, they reassured me they had available space for her in their program. We were the first people to be seen at the clinic and this was hopeful. After going through the full intake and meeting with the clinician, they reported to me that in fact they did not have a bed available for my daughter to do the inpatient rehab. This was disheartening because we lived an hour away. There were no other options available in our area, so I tried the next best option-finding therapy services. This was difficult because there was always some issue before me. If it were not an issue with insurance being accepted, then it was lack of openings. I became very frustrated and scared of the fact my child was dealing with substance issues and my hands were feeling tied.

This experience led me to really understand how disenfranchised I was. I was a single black mother with a need and lack of resources. The resources available to me were too far beyond my reach. I wish there were more resources and awareness for prevention. I look back and wish I could have done more to prevent or prepare for this situation. My child's school did not even have many resources to offer. My daughter was involved in a minor incident, in which the police were called and she was referred to the Department of Juvenile Services. I advocated for my daughter to be given random drug testing and monitoring, because I knew that the drug use was the root issue.

I was able to get my daughter into an outpatient therapy clinic. This was very promising and we looked forward to it. Everything was set and she was even feeling great about the prospect of sorting out her issues. My daughter's case manager with the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services helped us secure these services. It was not what I really felt she needed, but it was a start. Unfortunately, this did not come to be. She was found dead from a Fentanyl overdose about 6 days before her first appointment. I was devastated, but also riddled with so many feelings. My life definitely has not been the same. I wish there were something I could've done. I often wish I were more affluent and could have afforded to pay for my daughter to receive services. I am not sure that any of the services would have saved her from her affliction, but I often do wish the preventative measures could have been given to us. I look back on the very beginning and just try to sort out how did it even get to that point? What could I have done different? I hope that I can learn of some way to educate or support other parents to help prevent the loss of another child. I hope that one day I can use this event that changed my life to impact a change in the mental health and substance abuse services available to children. I mostly hope to heal from what trauma I have from such a nightmare.

I do support the HB522 for the juveniles who are dealing with opioid addiction. It would be very helpful to have these services initiated and paid for by the state. The families of these children that are

dealing with addiction are from all walks of life. It would be great to have the backing and support to help save these kids and help them get to thriving in life.