

Public Comment: A Voice from the Patient – Support for SB 550

TO: Chair Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: X. Hawkins

HEARING DATE: February 24, 2026

BILL: SB 550 – Health Care Decisions Act – Surrogate Decision Making – Mental Disorders (The H.E.R. Parity Act)

POSITION: SUPPORT (FAV)

I am writing today as a person living with multiple disabilities and a mental health disorder. I am writing because, too often, the laws meant to protect my autonomy actually leave me isolated in the moments I am most vulnerable. I am here to urge a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 550**.

The Loneliness of the Crisis

When I am in the middle of a mental health crisis, it is an incredibly lonely experience. I often find myself in hospital rooms or clinical settings, overwhelmed by a flood of information I don't know how to process. I am told things about my insurance, treatment, and other stuff, but when I am in crisis, none of that make sense to me.

In those moments, I am not looking for "freedom" to be left alone in a crisis; I am looking for the person who knows me best to help me navigate it all.

- **The Barrier to Help:** I have been in situations where I desperately needed help, but because of the way the law is currently written, the person I trust most—my mother—was shut out of the decision-making process.
- **The Confusion of the "Revolving Door":** I have been discharged before I was ready because I couldn't articulate what I needed, and the law wouldn't let my surrogate speak for me. This forces me into a revolving door of emergency rooms and instability.
- **Needing a Bridge:** I need a bridge between my medical needs and my recovery. When the law prevents my mother from acting as my surrogate for mental health, it doesn't protect my rights—it leaves me stranded without a safety net.

Why I Support SB 550

This bill is about healing, representation and equity. It is about ensuring that I am not alone when I lack the competency and capacity to process what is happening to me.

1. **Respecting My Choices:** By allowing me to have a surrogate, the law finally respects my documented wishes. It ensures that the person I have chosen is the one who helps me turn a medical crisis around.

2. **Ending the Isolation:** We must stop forcing medical emergencies into a revolving door. When my mother is empowered to help authorize my care, the "administrative chaos" fades, and I can focus on getting better.
3. **A Common-Sense Safety Net:** If I had a physical emergency, my family could help me immediately. I am asking for that same thing be applied to my mental health.

Please do not shut out the people who actually know how to help us. I am asking you to support SB 550 so that the next time I am lost in a crisis, I don't have to be alone. I deserve the right to have my most consistent advocate by my side, ensuring I receive the care I desperately need.

I respectfully urge you to support SB 550.

Please help me!