

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services
02/14/2023 01:30 PM
HB23-1153 Pathways To Behavioral Health Care
Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Barbara Vassis For themselves</p>	<p>Thank you Chair and committee members. My name is Barbara Vassis; representing myself and my family to support House Bill 1153.</p> <p>Grappling the complex needs of our loved ones, and therefore access to care, can seem insurmountable. Removing barriers between behavioral health and judicial systems is a crucial step in providing systemic support for those with serious mental illness and their families.</p> <p>From Apr. 21 - Apr. 22, my loved one spent 106 days in: ER, jail, crisis center, detox, homeless shelter, hospital, respite care, TRT program, or psychiatric facility. The cost of crisis care in lieu of coordinated treatment is vast, financially and in taxing systems' capacity.</p> <p>My daughter has been in jail since Aug., found incompetent to proceed in Dec. She is undergoing restoration due to lack of bed space at a psychiatric facility. She has not had a Preliminary Hearing.</p> <p>Lack of accountability within probation (she was non-compliant on a prior) and civil behavioral health (denied access to life-saving anti-psychotics) created a perfect storm of deepening psychoses and risky behaviors. A week after denied care, she and an accomplice broke into my home. A vehicle and various other property were taken.</p> <p>I am grateful she has a warm place to stay and 3 meals a day, even if in jail. If our last virtual visit is any indication, she will not be found competent in March.</p> <p>She did not know her rights to mental health care; a Medicaid member has the right to access care within seven days of request. She was unmedicated for 10 weeks. Psychosis kicks in between 5-10 days. I know my rights to share her background with care givers. I am the keeper of information, as are all other parents of loved ones with serious mental illness. I advocated for medication; after the psychosis takes hold she no longer wants it. The cycle is vicious and predictable.</p> <p>Coordinated care must prioritize residential treatment and housing. Our homes are not an option. Loved ones bounce from safe environments to homelessness overnight—vulnerable to food and</p>

	<p>housing insecurities; loss of resources; proof of identity, medication, lifelines (cell phones), and hygienic needs. Step-down programs, career options, sustainable check-ins, and daycare programs are needed.</p> <p>I believe we are “Better Together” and only then can we tackle these critical issues that affect each of us, directly (as family members), or indirectly (as taxpayers).</p> <p>For all of these reasons, I urge a yes vote on House Bill 1153.</p>
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