

House Judiciary

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HB24-1355 Measures to Reduce the Competency Wait List

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Vandana Singh For themselves	<p>March 24, 2024</p> <p>Dear Members of the House Judiciary Committee,</p> <p>On behalf of my daughter Paige, I am writing in support of HB-1355, Measures to Reduce the Competency Waitlist. My daughter has a diagnosis of autism, ADHD, PTSD and depression since middle and high school. She has been awaiting restoration in Boulder county jail since Oct 28, 2023, where she does not have access to her previous outpatient mental health services. There is almost no direct communication with her, and we have no information on her position on the competency wait list, and time frame to restoration. Additionally, she has been placed in restrictive housing/ disciplinary module for all of her time, leading to further deterioration in her mental health, and likely irreversible long term damage.</p> <p>There are hundreds of inmates in jails across Colorado, who are in a similar situation, and are being warehoused in Colorado jails while awaiting restoration. This is not the process of mental health recovery for long term improved outcomes, but simply a path for educating them on the legal process so that they can face charges.</p> <p>Colorado has the nation's third largest competency waitlist, and jails are being overfilled as poor substitutes for mental health hospitals. This is an expensive, ineffective way to solve Colorado's mental health crisis. A community based wraparound diversion program would provide individualized mental health, recovery and housing support and route them out of the competency system for class II misdemeanor offenses and below. This would shorten the waitlist for competency restoration and reduce contact with the criminal justice system.</p>

	<p>It is time to care for the mentally ill in Colorado and decriminalize mental health. Please vote yes on HB-1355. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.</p> <p>Vandana Singh Mom of Paige Singh, currently awaiting restoration in Boulder County Jail</p>
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