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**Testimony by Jannee Joy, Ph.D, LPC #2433**

**SafeHaven Counseling**

**Submitted to the Judiciary Committee - Bill Hearing, March 12, 2020**

**Regarding HB1271**

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

My name is Jannee Joy and over the past 30 years I have worked in a variety of both counseling and entrepreneurial fields ranging from private practice, schools, universities, group homes, psychiatric hospitals to teaching, business, and finance. SafeHaven Counseling is a private practice focused on therapeutic client treatments for depression, bipolar, personality disorders, trauma, grief, dissociative disorders, loss, attachment disorders, and various other forms of mental health issues and illness.

**Emergency 72-Hour Hold for Observation & Evaluation**

SafeHaven Counseling recommends an immediate treatment law to address any mental illness (AMI), which is defined as “a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder. AMI can vary in impact, ranging from no impairment to mild, moderate, and even severe impairment serious mental illness (SMI)”, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

I hope for a relevant and timely law that will work together with communities in a manner to foster stability, not a deficient law that leads to continued sickness. Serious mental illness is defined as “a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.” Unfortunately there continues to be those who lack the insight to recognize their illness, imbalance(s), remain unmedicated, self-medicate inappropriately, and/or are too unstable to seek care on their own.

As a result, the journey towards recovery may only begin through a vital call made to law enforcement, which will initiate a critical emergency psychiatric evaluation. A 72-hr mental health hold would allow for evaluation and treatment in place of a confiscation of weapon which does not address the AMI & SMI issues.

AMI & SMI are problematic among Colorado’s population and approximately half of these individuals go untreated, which includes issues like major depression, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, to name a few – conditions affecting personality, mood, and stability. Many of these individuals go untreated due to a lack of insight regarding their condition. When left untreated, these individuals are at high risk for personality disorders, mood disorders, psychotic disorders, and anxiety/post traumatic stress disorders. Untreated, the extreme risk for profound

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circumstances that negatively impact them and those around them increase exponentially. Furthermore, why not keep seriously mentally ill individuals out of the court system and further protect them by getting them the real help they need.

### **Support for HB1271**

I support changing the emergency psychiatric evaluation standard from “imminent harm” to “extreme risk” because with “imminent harm” standards, law enforcement is placed in serious danger as these types of individuals will go above and beyond to “fight” their way out of being “taken in”. This leads to tragedy instead of the opportunity to receive proper treatment.

My desire is to see families and communities experience a decrease in tragedies and an increase in early intervention. By changing the standard to “extreme risk” it will substantially increase the likelihood of proper care for AMI & SMI and remove the obstacle to treatment for Colorado citizens who are in a mental state that are too unstable or too sick to seek help on their own.

An “imminent harm” standard carries the unintended consequence of requiring individuals too unstable to help themselves to remain sick and continue suffering without intervention. Those who know these individuals often watch and wait in angst over whatever “imminent harm” develops, which by then most likely is too late.

I commend the efforts of the Colorado legislature and extend my support for HB1271 as it pertains to changing our “imminent harm” standard to “extreme risk”. I also support a 72-hour mental health hold to allow for evaluation and treatment in place of a confiscation of weapon which does not address the AMI & SMI issues for the reasons stated above.

Sowing Seeds,

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