

April 29th, 2018

Sen. Vicki Marble
Sen. Stephen Fenberg
Sen. Jerry Sonnenberg
Sen. Owen Hill
Sen. Lois Court

Re: SB18-270

Dear Committee Members,

I would like to encourage you to pass SB18-270 regarding treatment for mental illness and substance abuse. My name is Bobbi Morrow and I am the parent of a twenty-seven year-old young woman who suffers from severe and complicated mental illness and substance abuse disorder.

Since January 2013 my daughter has been placed on 10 Mental Health holds in 8 different hospitals. Seven of these have occurred in the last year and a half as a result of psychotic episodes, violent behavior and suicide attempts. These mental health holds have lasted anywhere from 6 hours to 72 hours; on three of these occasions she was sent to a psychiatric hospital for 7 to 14 days. Between mental health holds she has been homeless, arrested, and incarcerated. She has abused legal and illegal drugs (including methamphetamines) and attempted suicide.

Every time that she been on a mental health hold I have spoken to well meaning mental health professionals regarding longer term stable, safe transitional programs that could monitor medications and teach her the life skills she needs to manage her mental illness. Some of their responses follow:

"Unfortunately, Colorado is one of the worst places for mental health programs, there are hardly any." – Social Worker, Porters Hospital

"We don't have any programs like that and we don't keep patients if they are no longer a threat and we determine that they are stabilized on medications. She has to be released to an address so we will release her to a homeless shelter if she has no place else to go." – Program Director at Cedar Springs Hospital

"Actually, the best way for her to get the services she needs is through the criminal justice system." -- Psychiatric Evaluator, Aurora South

"She can either go home or she can go on the streets." – Denver Health Psychiatrist

"It's just a constant revolving door." – Adams County Police Officer

Would we tell an amputee to walk home from the hospital or would that person be sent to a rehabilitation center to learn the skills needed to live with his/her impairment? Right now, people living with mental illness can't even navigate this dysfunctional system to access the few programs that will help them move forward to a long-term recovery. This bill is a first step that can help patients and their families find the services that are so desperately needed in this community. Please, send this bill to the legislature for a vote.

Respectfully,



Bobbi Morrow

6390 E. Floyd Dr. Denver, CO 80222
303-349-4689