

March 17, 2023

Good morning, Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and honorable members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

My name is Kandie Cleaves, I live in Garland, and I wish to testify in opposition of **LD 445 "Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Apply for a Waiver from the Federal Government for the Medicaid Limitation on Payment to a Facility with More Than 16 Inpatient Beds for Psychiatric Treatment."**

I fully believe the intent of those behind this bill was meant to be helpful and get more services, that said it would be anything but that. What it would do is open the door to bring in more beds. We currently can't staff all the beds we already have. The limitation in place that you are wanting to have overlooked is what has helped protect my community from an even harder push to re-institutionalize.

My biological family and I have a history of mental health issues. When I was at my lowest as an adult, I was helped by being referred to two different councilors a week, that lasted almost 4 yrs. I had significant traumas than needed to be dealt with. That's not even possible to get today. That ability though ultimately saved significant money for the state. Had I been sent to a Psychiatric hospital my children would have had to be placed into foster care; To get them back would have required evaluations, counselling, visitations, ongoing supervision etc. All of these would have added up to significant costs. Instead, my needs were met by the councilors and a case manager.

One of my children required in patient treatment twice as a child and once as an adult. Each stay lasted approximately a month. During which time they were able to help her get stabilized. After her final time she was finally ready to participate in outside programs to help keep herself well. Because of so many cuts a few yrs. ago her number of services has dwindled, those of us closest can see the effects, thankfully what services she still has keeps her from falling to far, but they haven't allowed her to be all she could be if she had proper access to outside services.

Many these days tell me their stays are just a few days, some as short as 2. That isn't about providing proper care or stabilizing it is about money. These people go back into the community frequently without proper supports .

One young woman in particular was desperately trying to get help. Each time the hospital either turned her away or admitted her short time and released while still in the middle of a mental health crisis. Her lack of care and supports led to being jailed, losing custody of a baby and never being given the supports needed to recover so that she could be in her child's life.

When the Sherriff attempted to have her sent over for care, they claimed lack of beds. Yet when he asks how many beds are available he is required to file for a Freedom of Access. A life list of beds should be available to providers and to law enforcement at the very least.

Rather than focusing on a bill like this my peers and our tax dollars would be far better served if you focus on the Office of Behavioral Health's strategic plan efforts.

In Closing I again ask you to **vote "Ought Not to Pass" on LD 445.**

Kandie Cleaves

Garland