

Senator Rotundo, Representative Sachs and esteemed members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, my name is Rob Prescott and I am here to voice my opposition to LD 2214 - it allocates money to walk-in centers that our loved ones will not use.

I am here because the future of my 26-year-old son who suffers from schizophrenia rests in your hands.

His story, like others with serious brain disorders, is similar in that he has suffered needlessly due to a continued denial that over 50% of those affected with his condition suffer from 'lack of insight' - S cannot comprehend that he is mentally ill when unmedicated.

I wish I had more time to share the anguish our family has endured these past 4 years: violent threats, disappearances, his drug use trying to cope, starving himself, evictions, all the while becoming angrier, more delusional and paranoid.

Each time we called the crisis hotline, visited walk-in and recovery centers, we were refused any assistance and told our son's "right to refuse treatment" outweighs his right to humane treatment.

Law enforcement has been a shining light during this time. Tirelessly working with us, advising, and taking S to the hospital ER three times. These dedicated, frontline workers have expressed sorrow and frustration that their intervention is currently the only viable path to getting help to those with serious brain disorders.

They know, as do we, that our son will never go to a walk-in center, homeless shelter, or accept free food, due to paranoid delusions and lack of insight. They live the truth daily that the mental health system wilfully ignores. This is dangerous not only for our son's welfare but also for the public. Unmedicated our son is unable to care for himself, unpredictable, angry, racked with delusions and paranoia, and can easily become violent.

Following another heroic effort by the police, our son is hospitalized in Sanford - third time lucky. He has been involuntarily committed with court ordered medication. S is starting to respond and there is hope he will return to being a tax-paying, law-abiding, contributing citizen.

However, this can only happen if an intensive case manager and/or an ACT team is appointed to assist him and, as of this moment, not likely due to lack of funding required to support and expand such crucial programs.

Instead, he will be released when deemed "stable," and sadly the tragic pattern will be doomed to repeat yet again, with worsening symptoms thus increasing the probability he may harm himself or others.

PLEASE vote for *effective* help for those that suffer from serious brain disorders so they will have access to treatment before tragedy and our son, plus everyone else in Maine, can have a safe, productive, and healthy future.

Thank you