

**Sarah Smith**

40053 Little Fall Creek Rd.  
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March 31, 2025

RE: Testimony in Opposition of HB 2467

To the House Committee on Judiciary:

**Sarah Smith, Shield Coordinator, MindFreedom International**

My name is Sarah Smith and I have a daughter who was civilly committed twelve, consecutive times for a total of six years.

I oppose HB 2467 because it makes existing problems with Oregon's mental health system even worse by further eroding the rights of individuals perceived to be mentally ill and robs funds from life enhancing evidence-based alternatives such as peer respites. It is expensive to implement, ineffective, and inhumane. It will have the effect of expanding the numbers of people who are civilly committed.

**Family members who are promoting this bill, are frustrated that they cannot find help to support their loved one and ensure safety during a mental health crisis. I share their frustration.**

**Oregon families like ours deserve support and safety. But House Bill 2467 making it easier to commit individuals is not a solution for violence.**

**We have criminal laws in place for assault and violence. Families who are afraid for a loved one can control a loved one through civil commitment for a small period of time but in the long run, civil commitment robs a person of their hope and personhood. It will compound existing traumas, breed mistrust, disempower individuals, and impede long term recovery.**

**Proponents of this bill simply do not understand how traumatizing and harmful involuntary treatment can be.**

**The bill's main sponsor, [National Alliance for the Mentally Ill \(NAMI-Oregon\)](#) claims that the bill's supporters are showing greater 'compassion' by forcing individuals into 'treatment'.**

**This bill is not about compassion; it's about control.**

**My daughter is a shadow of her former vibrant, intelligent, creative, energetic, and loving self. She is so drugged, she goes days and days without being able to get out of bed, except to go to the bathroom or sit up long enough to eat a meal.**

**Our entire family is terrified of medical professionals because of my daughter's past, forced psychiatric treatment. One of our biggest fears is when our daughter gets sick and needs to see a doctor or needs to see a dentist. On a monthly basis she must show up at Lane County Behavioral Health for a fifteen minute med check and to get the blood draw that will enable her to pick up her refill of the chemical straight jackets to which she is habituated.**

**I wonder, will this be the day she relives her traumatic experiences of being at Oregon State Hospital? Is this the day that the drug fails to metabolize in her system or her body exhibits an intolerance to the ever increasing dosages? Is this the day her memories will cause her to dissociate, forget who she is and where she is, and scream at the top of her lungs? Is this the day she is considered to be having a 'crisis' and must be transported in a police car to the ER?**

**Our entire family suffers from toxic memories: from our precious daughter being hauled in front of a judge wearing scrubs wet from her urine due to the incontinence-inducing drugs she was forcibly injected with, unable to think clearly and verbally defend herself, disarmed by massive quantities of Haldol. No medical or legal staff caring enough to insist that she be allowed to change to attire more suitable for an official hearing.**

**The judge banging his gavel sealing her fate, parroting the 'expert' who had only evaluated my daughter for less than thirty minutes on the worst day of her life.**

The memory of being told by an Oregon State Hospital psychiatrist that her experience of having living things crawling in her scalp was a delusion, a symptom of her disease, only to find out the following day that her two day stay at Lane County Jail had given her a case of head lice.

A memory of the administrator of a restrictive facility hauling her to her probation officer for not being treatment compliant because the drugs were giving her akathisia, a serious and well documented side effect of 'antipsychotic' drugs and when attempting to argue with a probation officer, a police officer slamming her down, concussing her head on a bookshelf, and not receiving first-aid while bleeding, just a night in a jail cell.

A memory of seeing her in five point restraints in an ER and injected with a mind numbing dose of Haldol then being charged with assault for trying to defend herself.

So when I take her for her monthly blood draw, I pray that her trauma doesn't well up to the surface, I pray she remains silent, is compliant, keeps her head down. I know what the system can do. They harm young people, then blame our young people's behavior on their 'disease.'

The mental health system itself is sick and the professionals who work within are often traumatized themselves or delusional about the amount of good they do. This system itself is sick and violent, yet family members want to expose their precious children to this failed model and its reliance on forced psychiatry and state sanctioned violence.

I pray that my daughter doesn't experience unbearable side effects such as akathisia or tardive dyskinesia. I pray that she doesn't experience the early mortality experienced by a huge number of heavily medicated consumers and ex-patients.

Many family members and survivors won't go on record. I too am afraid and I resisted going on the record for many years. I won't hide any longer.

I will not sit by and watch other family members misrepresent acts of violence against vulnerable people like my daughter as a form of 'compassion' when there are ample, non-violent models to support individuals and families during a temporary crisis.

People like my daughter deserve real support when they experience a 'crisis'.

Humane effective interventions for people in crisis do exist but our community doesn't invest in them. These alternatives emphasize personal choice and empowerment and psycho social approaches. Why don't we

invest in them? Because they do not keep the gravy train running for big Pharma. They don't get much attention from the mainstream, corporate press, lobbyists, or paid influencers. Parents, patients, lawmakers and policymakers aren't told about them.

Some of these options are [peer respites](#), [Soteria Houses](#), and [Open Dialogue](#), just to name a few. There are alternative training models for family members as well, including [Emotional CPR](#), [Families Healing Together](#), [Survivors and Family Members Empowered](#), [Intentional Peer Support](#), and [Supported Decision Making](#).

I often wish I could go back in time and protect my beautiful, freedom-loving daughter from the 'treatment' she received by force.

It changed the trajectory of her life. It set her on a downward spiral. We lost our trust in psychiatric 'experts', as well as the judicial process. We live in fear.

Obviously, I can't go back in time to erase this terrible experience but I can speak loudly in opposition to this bill in the hopes of preventing other parents from having to witness their child experience a similar harm.

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Sincerely yours,