

Submitter: Scott Kerman  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2467  
Chair Kropf, Vice-Chair Chotzen, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the House Committee on Judiciary:

I am Scott Kerman, and I serve as the Executive Director of Blanchet House & Farm. I'm writing to show my support for HB 2467 because I believe these changes are necessary to save the lives of people who are almost always in danger because of their serious mental illness.

For context, thirty years ago, I worked as a criminal defense attorney in Houston, Texas, representing clients on death row. I visited the Huntsville prison numerous times to meet with them. That experience shaped my deep respect for civil liberties and my wariness of government overreach.

That said, I support this bill—not because I want to see more people civilly committed, but because current law fails to protect those with severe mental illness who desperately need intervention to survive.

Under existing law, what does it mean to be in “imminent danger” to oneself?

For someone with serious mental illness who is homeless, it does not include being unable to prevent themselves from being sexually assaulted, attacked, exploited, trafficked, or even killed.

It does not include the inability to provide for basic survival—food, hygiene, sanitation, or medical care—without extraordinary intervention from others.

As a tragic example, last August we lost Blanchet House meal guest Bethanie Johnson to a hit-and-run driver. Like so many of our meal guests with serious mental illness, Bethanie frequently walked in front of cars at all hours, yet under the current standard, she could not be considered in imminent danger—until I suppose the exact moment she was killed.

This is the absurdity we face. An individual isn't deemed to be in imminent danger until it is too late to intervene.

We can do better. I believe this bill protects Civil Rights while improving care by ensuring that commitment decisions are based on well-defined clinical and legal standards. This bill is a necessary step toward a more humane and responsible system—one that gives people in grave danger a chance at treatment and survival

before tragedy strikes.

Thank you.