

Submitter: Marla Knauss

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Judiciary

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2467

My name is Marla Knauss. My son with schizophrenia has been treated as a throw-away person in Oregon, with nowhere to receive even adequate medical care. His only access to treatment has been through arrest, and then he's spent more time in the county jail, unmedicated and terrified, than at the state hospital, where he gets bare bones treatment so he can face his charges.

Those charges are always for things he does because his obvious psychosis is untreated. The system churns him out again and again without any compassion or medically sensible intervention.

My son doesn't believe he is sick because of anosognosia, a common symptom of a psychotic disorder. Refusing treatment is rational to him because of this. I tried for years to keep him safe in my home, while county mental health staff explained that he would have to get really dangerous to get treatment. He got dangerous enough that I couldn't live with him anymore, but his dangerous behaviors have never led to good care. The county told me to get a restraining order and make him homeless, so he could get into the system by being arrested. He's been criminalized again and again but never helped.

My son's illness is a serious medical condition, not a choice, but outpatient providers keep kicking him out of care for not figuring it out on his own. The sicker he's gotten; the more the state has abandoned him.

Harm is required—not prevented—by Oregon's current laws. Please pass this legislation to make access to treatment more reasonable and prevent avoidable crises and deaths in families like mine.