

Submitter: Robin Byrd
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2467

My name is Robin Byrd. I'm a retired educator of 30 years, but my greatest accomplishment is not the thousands of children I taught. It was being a mother to an extraordinary, courageous child.

My love and his courage weren't enough to save my son Nate from a brain-based illness that went untreated because of Oregon's treatment laws. He was 20 when he took his own life last Christmas. Adding to my heartache is the knowledge that the system had all kinds of chances to save him.

In the week before he died, Nate tried several times to jump out of a moving car and tried to set fire to our home. None of that was dangerous enough to meet the standard for treatment. He was turned away from three emergency rooms, including a special behavioral hospital. He saw his primary care doctor, who saw how unwell he was, but there was nothing anyone would do until death was imminent. My son finally met the state's treatment criteria when it was too late to save him.

I watched in horror as he got sicker and more intent on harming himself to escape from the terror caused by his psychotic brain. Everyone just kept telling me that he would need to accept help or demonstrate that he was imminently dangerous. I knew he was way too confused to understand what help might even mean, but I trusted professionals to give good advice. They left my son alone to die instead of helping when he was obviously in danger from his untreated severe mental illness.

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.