

Dear Judiciary Committee:

Thank you for your service to my peers in Oregon and for your interest in mental health.

My name is Ty Smith, I live in La Junta CO. I'm a mental health consumer, a peer provider, and a family member.

I signed up to testify on HB2467 and oppose it. It was very concerning what felt like biased hearing of those who came to speak. Those in favor of the bill had unlimited time to speak and a majority of them had a chance to speak where only a handful opposing the BH2467 were heard and put on a 2-minute timer. This Legislation will strip your citizens from their rights, and they do not even have a chance to confront those who while have good intentions do not have the full understanding. Not only do I think this will make your job harder because how can you make an informed decision without all the information, it also is a disservice to everyone.

Forced treatment is a failure of the system. As a peer, peer provider and a family member I understand the perspectives you need to look at. I do understand that people need help and supports. The problem is the system is full of people who do not want treatment while the people who do seek it out are turned away because the system is overwhelmed and overloaded.

As a peer I've been in crisis too many times to count and spent much of my young life in the system. It was to the point that my providers told me I had no future, they told my mother to relinquish all custody to the state, and both of us that I would spend the rest of my life behind bars. All I've gained from forced care is how to lie and hide the truth of my thoughts and feelings. I know what to say to get me out faster and all forced care does enrage me and gives me time to think on how to do whatever I was doing better.

As a peer provider I know that if I had to force treatment on someone all it would do is damage the relationship, I've worked so hard to develop with my consumer. I understand that if I force treatment on someone then I will be one less person that person can seek help from ever again and create distrust not only for me but everyone that person will work with in the future.

As a family member I know if the person does not trust the system or has anyone they can talk to about their problems it will make their symptoms worse. I try to remind other family members that forced treatment will remove options for their family members because it will clog an overwhelmed and burden system.

We need to change the perception of treatment. Its more socially acceptable to use drugs and/or alcohol than to seek help. If the perception is for people that you will be punished for seeking help or that treatment is only for those who are so extreme that they don't know they are crazy or they will do outrageous things, who is going to seek help before they get to that point?

Please take a moment to think about what you would like if you were in crisis. Before the point where you feel like you need to take your life or someone else, you are taken away from all your friends and family, all your supports, loved ones and everything you care about, away from the things you enjoy in life and any luxuries. You are placed in a contained space filled with

others who are just as upset as you if not more, many of them in pain or angry and you can not help them or get help yourself. The people that work there have to deal with crises nonstop, people who are violent and sometimes very scary. I could go into restraint and seclusion, or medication that strips the soul but that would be too hard to describe I believe.

My questions are: How is this treatment? If you experienced this, would you want to tell people how you really felt or thought knowing you would be sent here again and again? How do you know people are Anosognosia when they have been trained like myself to lie to you and hide their true feelings?

Can you imagine a system that is compassionate and understandable instead, wouldn't you want to go there to speak to people who understand and will not condemn you for your thoughts and feelings? As a peer I know you will have better outcomes if your system is compassionate and understanding. As a provider I know how much easier my job is when I have a strong relationship with my consumer, and I can help them seek the treatment they want instead of what is forced on them. It's like that old saying about bringing a horse to a watering hole. As a family member I want my family to be happy and healthy. I feel better knowing they have someone they feel safe going too.

Please don't make it hard for people to seek help by clogging the system and destroying the trust needed for people to reveal their true selves. Oh and if you want a reason why investing in them is good I should say that today, I'm a proud homeowner, a high-level policy maker for my state, a fully employed tax payer and my community would describe me as an valuable.