

Submitter: Sarah Smith
On Behalf Of: Family Alliance Mental Health Recovery
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4106

Chair and Members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 4106. I speak as the mother of someone who has experienced first-hand the suffering and harm that results when young people who are already in distress or experiencing an extreme state due to trauma are criminalized and subjected to even more trauma by first responders. For every time that my daughter was treated kindly by a first responder she was handled brutally by another, less trained, less professional responder.

When police conduct routine secure escorts of hospital patients and group home residents to official courtroom hearings, I noticed that the procedures are uniformly applied with exceptions, I have seen little old ladies suffering from dementia being led into the courtroom handcuffed. This is wrong. How would you like this lack of dignity for your grandmother or your daughter?

My daughter was forced to the ground in Lane County's parole and probation office by a police officer because she did not quickly obey orders. As she was pushed to the ground, she hit her head on a bookshelf in the office causing deep swelling and a bloody contusion on her forehead. She was put in a jail cell for a day and did not receive any medical attention. When she came home, she still had deep bruising around her eye but it took me a long time to piece together what happened. The level of trauma that she experienced made it difficult to communicate right away and she was 'mute' for several weeks.

A friend's daughter experienced a psychotic break around the same time and the neighbor called the police because my friend's daughter was seen crouching in the bushes and talking to herself. The responding police quickly escalated the situation by barking instructions that she didn't understand readily. He forced to face down on the ground, cuffed her, and arrested her on the spot. She was terrified. Later, her mother obtained an attorney and filed a complaint with the Portland police and the charges were dropped. Her recovery was quicker because she experienced family support and a quick legal resolution. My daughter, in contrast, did not receive the support she needed to file a complaint. Consequently, her recovery has been much slower and she mistrusts police to this day.

My daughter is not violent, yet her communication challenges have made her the victim of violence at the hands of police.

I do not support this bill