

Submitter: Renee Raschke
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4106

My name is Renee Raschke, and I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB 4106.

I am a retired Mental Health worker with over 25 years of experience in mental health in the community, State Prison, and county Parole Office. I have a very close relative who experiences mental illness and who is currently in Oregon State Hospital. My loved one had many dreams for his life. He did well in school, had friends, and is a very talented artist. We love him very much. With his illness, he lost many of his dreams. His life is filled with many traumas and disappointments. He is strong. He does not need violence; he needs compassion. We ask for your help.

At a time when we are witnessing federal law enforcement in Minnesota and other cities in the United States that lack the experience, training, and accountability to perform their jobs. The public is clamoring for law enforcement accountability. HB 4106 would expand immunity to police, resulting in a lack of accountability for their action. Rather than providing a lack of accountability, I would like to see increased training and buy-in for de-escalation skills. I would like to see increased training about persons with Mental Illness. I would hope safety officers are there to help and not harm; to de-escalate rather than produce increased trauma and harm to persons with mental illness and their families.

When my loved one is having a crisis that we are having difficulty handling, we call 911. Law Enforcement and Project Respond respond to help our family and my loved ones who are in crisis. In a safe manner and as a team, we de-escalate: ourselves, our loved one, and the situation. Surrounding my loved one with love and compassion, not guns. My loved one becomes more amenable to going to the hospital and getting help. I am not opposed to wrist restraints for transport or medication restraints when needed. But even these methods cause trauma.

I reject HB 4106. We want legislation that requires a hiring process for Safety Officers that weeds out a lack of compassion. We need officers who are not only highly trained and adept at de-escalation but also buy into their need to be helpful. I'd like to see stronger requirements for disability-informed practice. Most of all in relation to this new bill, I want to see meaningful accountability. Officers need to be held accountable for their actions. Training of officers needs to include not only an emphasis on officer safety, but it also needs to emphasize the safety of those with mental illness. There needs to be accountability by the system for improper handling of situations. Accountability could include retraining, demotion, sanctions, dismissal, prosecution, restrictions from working in the occupation, and more.

A last mention is that much money is poured into our mental health system in Oregon. But there is very limited appropriate housing at all levels for those in need. There are a few appropriate housing examples at each level of care. When my loved one is well enough to leave the State Hospital, there is no appropriate place for him to go.

thank you for your time

Renee Raschke