

Testimony to Senate Finance Committee by Faith Myers—February 6, '08

Mr. Chair, Senate Finance Committee members,

My name is Faith Myers. I support the passage of Senate Bill 8.

As a patient I have been in acute care psychiatric facilities in Alaska, Washington and Nevada.

As an advocate, over the last few years I have spoken to CEO's, policymakers, along with numerous advocates in 5 states.

Senate Bill 8 only asks psychiatric facilities to make a good faith effort at providing the gender of staff of the patient's choice for intimate care services.

Regardless of what the institutions or the lobbyists say, there is a callousness or apathy that develops in institutions and psychiatric facilities. It is the statutes and regulations that protect patients. The first day a psychiatric patient walks into a facility for treatment, the goal should be to empower patients to make their own decisions and work towards their recovery.

Reducing recidivism and trauma to psychiatric patients is the goal of Senate Bill 8.

Disability Law Center, Psych/Rights, Alaska Mental Health Board have all testified for the passage of Senate Bill 8. Aron Wolf, M.D.; Ann F. Jennings, PhD; NAMI—Anchorage; Alaska Mental Health Consumer Web have all written letters detailing the importance of allowing psychiatric patients gender choice. Those letters should be in your possession.

In closing, I'm asking that you pass Senate Bill 8. Thank you.

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Faith Myers

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Testimony to Senate Finance Committee on Sen. Bill 8 by Dorrance Collins

Mr. Chair, Committee members, My name is Dorrance Collins,

In a recent Alaska Supreme Court decision, the justices stated, "there is a clear, unavoidable tension between psychiatric treatment facilities seeking convenience / economics and patient rights which can manifest itself into patient abuse."

The justices saw it as a given that without oversight there was no reasonable expectation that patients would be treated fairly and have their rights protected.

Disability Law Center, in a 4 page opinion, stated that psychiatric patients did have a legal right to privacy, and that included issues of modesty. The attorney for Psych/ Rights in a one page letter concurred with Disability Law Center's opinion.

Between 60% and 90% of acute care psychiatric patients have been sexually and or physically abused respectively during their lifetime. Recovery begins with allowing a patient to protect themselves and take part in decisions.

Senate Bill 8 only asks that psychiatric facilities make a good faith effort. Passing Senate Bill 8 would not require facilities to hire extra staff.

In closing, I'm asking that the Senate Finance committee pass Senate Bill 8.

Thank you,

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