

Testimony to House HSS Committee,

February 2014

Mr. Chair, Committee members,

My name is Faith Myers. For the last 10 years I have volunteered as a mental health patient advocate. Also, I have personally been in psychiatric institutions and units as a patient. I support House Bill 214.

There are approximately 38,000 Americans who commit suicide each year. Ninety percent are considered to have a mental illness--In Alaska there are approximately 27,000 individuals who receive psychiatric treatment each year.

The current grievance procedure law and administrative codes used to establish psychiatric patient complaint or grievance procedure policies do little to recognize or accommodate a psychiatric patient's disabilities.

Psychiatric patients need an answer to a grievance or a complaint faster than is currently happening. Some patients in danger need an urgent grievance procedure. Patients in acute crisis and unable to concentrate need a written grievance and appeal procedure. These requirements are presently not in the law AS47.30.847.

Alaska is not recognizing the disabilities of the mentally ill in the grievance and appeal process. Acute care patients in clinics or an institution cannot wait 7 to 14 days, or in some cases 30 days, for an answer to a complaint.

When the state makes a patient feel powerless in the grievance process, the chances for recovery are reduced. Patients need written grievance procedure rules given to them, a shorter period of time for a resolution, an appeal process, and an urgent grievance procedure.

The state is spending far more money picking up the broken pieces after a patient cannot file a grievance in a fair way than the state would spend providing a good grievance procedure law that recognizes a patient's disabilities. I support House Bill 214. Thank you.

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