

Testimony to the House HSS Committee,

February, 2014

Mr. Chair, Committee members,

My name is Dorrance Collins. I volunteer as a mental health advocate.

I support the efforts of House Bill 214 to improve psychiatric patient rights and the grievance procedure law.

There are approximately 225 patient complaints filed at Alaska Psychiatric Institute each year. Some of the complaints are as follows: Denial of basic rights, medication errors, physical abuse, sexual misconduct, safety concerns, respect and dignity, etc.

There is only an estimate of the state-wide complaints by patients. It could be as high as 700 a year.

Psychiatric patients cannot file a grievance in a fair way because AS47.30.847 and 7AAC12.890(d) simply tells the psychiatric institutions and clinics to write a patient grievance procedure—anyway they want to and revise it anytime they want to. And institutions choose the impartial body that hears a patient's complaint.

The opponents of HB214 are going to tell you about the Federal government and the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospital Organizations. Both have an absolutely poor history of protecting psychiatric patients.

You are going to be told that every single psychiatric patient is happy. How do you come back from physical abuse, mistreatment and denial of basic rights.

I am asking the legislature to improve grievance rights for all psychiatric patients. Thank you.

Reference Information: Approximately 27,000 individuals receive psychiatric treatment each year. Approximately one third are considered acute care—Ninety percent of the individuals who commit suicide are considered to have a mental illness.

Dorrance Collins, Mental Health Advocates, 3240 Penland Pkwy, Sp. 35 Anchorage, AK.99508
(907) 929-0532