

Testimony to the House Hss Committee,

Mr. Chair, Committee members, My name is Faith Myers.

Every single improvement in psychiatric patient rights has been opposed by somebody.

In 1984, psychiatric patient were given the right by law to be free from corporal punishment; no other class of people in Alaska needed to be given that right.

In 1981, psychiatric patients were given 7 rights in law. The attorney general wrote a letter supporting the passage of the bill; he stated the bill should be passed to protect the private psychiatric hospitals and units from lawsuits; improving quality of patient care was secondary.

The states of Maine and Georgia made extensive improvements to their psychiatric patient grievance procedure laws and rules. There was no reduction in quality of patient care—In fact, Maine has one of the top ratings of quality of psychiatric patient care. The state of Georgia produced a 14 page patient grievance procedure law—It is a pretty good law.

Large psychiatric institutions—whether it is a bad patient grievance procedure law or a good patient grievance procedure law, institutions will adjust.

The question is—how do we in Alaska want to be remembered?

Add to HB 214 that patients and guardians have the right to file a grievance at the time of their choosing and a right to file an appeal.

I support the passage of House Bill 214CS.

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Testimony to House HSS Committee,

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

A hundred years ago when an acute care psychiatric patient walked through the doors of an institution, the institution owned that patient for all matters concerning rights and quality of care.

The Alaska psychiatric patient grievance procedure law (AS47.30.847) is a throwback to the methods of a hundred years ago. The law tells the psychiatric institutions and units to write the patient grievance procedure, due process rules, appeal process and to establish an impartial body that hears the patient's complaint.

In 2010, Disability Law Center with offices in Fairbanks, Juneau and Anchorage, stated in a letter: "It is the position of the Disability Law Center that AS47.30.847 is inadequate to protect the right of mental health patients to file meaningful grievances."

In 2007, the Alaska Mental Health Board, advisors to the legislature and the Advisory Board on Alcohol and Drug Abuse passed a motion to unanimously support the revision of AS47.30.847, psychiatric patient grievance procedure law.

In 2007, the Mental Health Trust Board of Directors, the largest mental health advocacy organization in the state, voted to support the revision of AS47.30.847.

In 2007, the Anchorage chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness wrote a letter calling for the revision of AS47.30.847, psychiatric patient grievance procedure law.

Inadequate to protect the right of mental health patients to file meaningful grievances—I agree.

In closing, I support the passage of House Bill 214.

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