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Testimony RE HB 214

My name is Jamelia Saied and I live in Anchorage. Thank you for providing this opportunity to accept comments on this important piece of legislation. I have worked as a professional mental health counselor for app. 20 years and for the last five years have focused on peer support counseling. For the last three years I have presented introductory sessions on the recovery program Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) at API 4-5 times per month. In a majority of these sessions one or more patients have expressed frustration with having an issue of importance to them either not being addressed by API staff or addressed in what they feel is an unsatisfactory manner. Frequently these issues revolve around being able to contact family or friends, medication decisions, how long they will be held at API, or lack of a plan after discharge. Because my role is to provide educational material about WRAP and I am a contracted provider, not an API employee, I have to inform these individuals that I cannot intervene to assist them. From a personal perspective I find this frustrating, especially when an individual has expressed a concern and I come back a week later and find this same concern has not been addressed. I fully

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appreciate that API is understaffed. However some of the

issues I see patients presenting with could be handled in a few minutes rather than being ignored.

HB 214 will go a long way toward addressing grievances of mental health patients, especially in the area of requiring an urgent grievance procedure and 24-hour telephone line to report these grievances. Individuals deserve the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Being committed to a mental health facility should not result in a person's rights as a human beings being negated. The stated purpose of confinement in an institution, or treatment outside an institution, is to help an individual who is struggling to become stabilized and on the road to recovery. When an individual instead receives forced treatment or medication without their consent it demeans them as individuals and makes recovery more difficult. For all these reasons I, and others who are testifying, have expressed I strongly urge you to support this needed legislation.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.