

Testimony – March 21, 2017

Susan Geary

H.B. 49

House Finance Sub Committee on Health & Human Services

Mr. Chairman and Members of this Distinguished Committee:

My name is Susan Geary. I have never testified before and, in fact, this is the first time I've ever been in this building so please bear with me. I'm here today to speak on behalf of so many other mothers that have watched their children disintegrate before their eyes due to the awful symptoms of mental illness.

Because you changed the Residential State Supplement program four years ago, my daughter's life has been changed forever. For the past 2 ½ years, my daughter has lived at "House by the Side of the Road" owned by Ms. Deb Hamner-Price in Cincinnati. My daughter pays most of her SSI payment for the support this home provides. She could not live there unless the Residential State Supplement program helped pay the cost of care she receives in that home.

Prior to coming to Ms. Hamner-Price's residence, my daughter was homeless, running the streets, going on spending sprees and we didn't know if the next call we received would be to tell us she was dead. Tricia suffers from BiPolar Disorder and anxiety. Someone at the Talbert House recommended Tricia visit Ms. Deb's residence to see if this would be the right setting for Tricia. Ms. Deb and Tricia bonded almost instantly and that is the beginning of Tricia's memorable experience. Deb has rules that must be followed and regulations to comply with while providing a safe haven for her clients. Over the past 2 ½ years it has not always been an easy road for Tricia to go down. Tricia was getting medications from several different medical doctors and would doctor shop with multiple ailments (which is part of her BiPolar disease). She was getting her prescriptions from approximately six different Pharmacies. Ms. Deb has since gotten Tricia into the Greater Cincinnati Behavioral center as a client where everyone involved in Tricia's care are able to see her records which allows for medications not to be duplicated and/or have Tricia overmedicated. Ms. Deb allows her clients freedom but also requires them to follow her house rules. Tricia attends groups to help her with her impulsive behaviors, social skills and ability to be somewhat independent.

Tricia's story does not end here. it is an ongoing and lifelong process. However, without the opportunity to be a resident at "House by the Side of the Road" I truly believe Tricia would not be where she is today if here at all. God has blessed Tricia and her family by allowing Ms. Deb Hamner-Price to come into our lives.

A month ago, I had been told that there is now a waiting list for the Residential State Supplement program. Since you took action four years ago to increase funding for the Residential State Supplement program, 1,200 severely mentally disabled citizens are now off the streets (one being my daughter). More importantly, families do not have to worry about that dreadful call telling them their loved one has lost their life to this terrible illness.

For all of the mothers and fathers who deal with this illness, I beg you to increase the number of Residential State Supplement slots by 400. This will cost an additional \$2.5 million dollars per year or \$5 million dollars over two years. I know that you do so much for all citizens of this state but I really believe your support of the Residential State Supplement program saves more lives than any other program in the state.

Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.