

AGING COALITION

Kansas Mental Health Coalition

Topeka, Kansas

MARCH 15, 2008

Testimony presented to the Legislative Budget Committee

Re: HB ~~2236~~ Geriatric Mental Health Act

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ON BEHALF OF THE KMHCA

It is a pleasure to testify today regarding HB ~~2236~~ a geriatric mental health act for Kansas. In case you are wondering older adults are those considered 60 years and older.

My name is Bryce Miller, Topeka, Kansas, a 76-year-old volunteer and mental health advocate. I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 1974 and have been in recovery mode for over 34 years.

In addition to being a state employee for 19 years as a management analyst and retiring in 1993, I have had numerous advocacy, volunteer roles in the mental health field.

HOUSE AGING & LTC

DATE: 2/8/11

ATTACHMENT #2

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Advocacy positions I have had include:

1. Board member, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Kansas)
2. Board member and consumer representative, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Arlington, VA (NAMI)
3. Co-founder, Breakthrough House Inc., Topeka, KS
4. Governor's Mental Health Services Planning Council

In 2002, I traveled to Washington, D.C., to testify before the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health re: improvements needed in the older adults mental health system.

There is a quiet crisis in Kansas surrounding the older adults mental health system. However, in my

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opinion a major crisis is about to erupt because of the arrival of the first wave of boomers.

Improved, more cost effective methods for improving the older adult mental health system in Kansas include:

A. Improved collaboration between stakeholders including private and public mental health professionals, community mental health centers, area adult associations, state agencies and non-profit mental health agencies. Timely and prompt treatment of depressed older adults.

B. Improved and timely mental health education for patients. It has been estimated that 80 percent of depressed older adults don't understand depression and the various treatments.

C. Provision of older adult peer support groups (facilitated by older adults). See attached DBSA Colorado Springs pamphlet. Note the "Later Life Support Group" meets every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. in the Colorado Springs Senior Center.

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HB ~~236~~ needs to proceed and the Kansas Department on Aging we believe is the proper state agency to administer the system by utilizing existing AAA organizations. Thank you for your consideration.

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