

Testimony in support of HB 2459
Derek Hein
February 10, 2020

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Derek Hein and I appear before you today in support of HB 2459, the Kristi L. Bennett Mental Health Parity Act. Most of you know me as a lobbyist who represents a variety of clients and interests here in the Statehouse. I want to be clear that I am not here today expressing the views of those clients, nor the views of my lobbying firm.

I am here today as an individual who has utilized the services of thirteen inpatient and outpatient treatment centers, at least forty emergency room, more than two dozen detox facilities, and two mental health facilities. I have also had more than enough experiences sleeping on the ground because I had nowhere else to go.

I also stand before you today with more than a decade of continuous sobriety.

During the lowest points of my life, I was extremely fortunate to have some of the best private health insurance available. Despite this excellent coverage, there were multiple occasions where I was forced to leave an inpatient facility because they had determined five days was adequate treatment, or that three months of outpatient treatment was adequate for someone with chronic relapse history, severe depression, a history of suicide attempts, and no evidence of past long-term sobriety.

Oftentimes, following short stays in treatment I would drink before I arrived home—almost always within a few days. This nearly always led me back to yet another emergency room. This process repeated itself over and over again. It never made sense to me why it was my insurance provider's preference to pay for multiple emergency room visits instead of another week or two in an inpatient treatment facility.

The success rate for long-term sobriety is not good. I have heard numbers recently that say approximately 8% of people who try to get sober will stay sober one year. We will never have the means to change the lives of all who suffer from addiction, but if this bill keeps just one person in a treatment facility for one additional day so they can hear one additional thing that allows them to change their lives forever, then this is all worth it.

I do wish this bill went further and required 28 days, rather than 14. I also do not believe outpatient treatment to be an effective treatment for chronic alcoholics and drug addicts, so in a perfect world I would prefer an increase in the inpatient requirement and a reduction in the outpatient requirement.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my comments with you. I would be happy to answer questions at the appropriate time.