

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL NO. 2044

Committee on Health and Human Services

Thursday, January 26, 2017, 01:30 PM Room 546-S

by Barbara Gibson, Community Volunteer

I am Barbara Gibson, a deacon in the Episcopal Church and a volunteer with the Breakthrough Club in Wichita. I am here to support passage and funding for House Bill No. 2044 authorizing Medicaid payments for community-based rehabilitative and psychosocial services of the clubhouse.

The Breakthrough Club is a vital program of Episcopal Social Services and an indispensable part of our human services ministry. The agency brings hope to people in need by offering opportunities for positive changes in their lives and provides ways for individuals and groups to engage in meaningful volunteer service. I am one of the community volunteers expressing my faith commitment as a Chaplain to the Breakthrough Club and other agency programs.

At recent General Conventions of the Episcopal Church resolutions have been passed urging churches to educate their members on mental illnesses, reminding them that these conditions are brain disorders that may be treatable, and further urging them to focus on hospitality, inclusion and support for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

Information for communities and families affected by mental illness is available through the Episcopal Mental Illness Network, the National Alliance on Mental Illness and the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. These materials provide an introduction to key concepts in suicide prevention, new medications, treatments, improved forms of therapy. Significantly, they also emphasize the importance of community-based rehabilitative services to recovery.

All major faith traditions are addressing the community education factors that will help individuals and families cope with mental illnesses, but the lack of sufficient rehabilitative services is a health system issue. The clubhouse services provide a local, practical and affordable addition to our fragile state mental health system.

Those who come to Breakthrough Club are welcomed and connected in a community which some members call their “real family.” But it is far from being just a safe place for people who have been rejected and abandoned elsewhere. The clubhouse is actually a crucial place for our local community; it is a place where insight, hope and inspiration can flourish. I am seeing lives being transformed and people reintegrated into society.

Therefore, I urge the committee to support HB 2044 and to authorize support for the cost of rehabilitation services at the Breakthrough Club through the state Medicaid program.

