

Lydia Vorsteveld

I support S. 287 because in my experience hell is not a place to stay any longer than absolutely necessary. Let me explain. Days don't get much darker than the day you, as a parent have to make the decision to take your mentally unwell child to the hospital. At that moment, your son or daughter, and the entire family is in crisis. No parent imagines that they will hear their child say that they are so angry that they are afraid they might hurt someone, or so depressed that they don't want to live any more, or or see their child acting so erratically, that they can no longer keep that child safe. It is a tragic cry for help that hurts to hear. At those deepest, darkest times, for a parent, or any family member, the choice is clear: you must get your loved one professional help immediately, to avoid an even larger, even more devastating crisis from happening. I have had those dark days, more than once, coping with two adult children with mental illness. I have heard the dreaded words, and seen the devastation that a psychotic episode wreaks on a young mind.

"Help, I must get them help", is all you can think of as you approach the hospital. And, even though the situation is acute, and you feel like you will never have your son or daughter "back" from whatever living hell they are going through, you still hope and pray that with kindness, with medication and with time, they will come back from the abyss. The last thing you ever wanted for them is to be involuntarily medicated or held against their will in a hospital. It is truly a nightmare, but you have run out of options. It seems that you have entered some altered reality, where all choices are bad. How can you get someone help who desperately needs help, but doesn't recognize they need it? How can you help them without undermining their autonomy? It is a nearly impossible task, and it is only to be undertaken most cautiously when the crisis is so severe that there are no choices left. As horrible as the situation is when someone is hospitalized in crisis, at least S. 287 would expedite the judicial process so that help would come sooner rather than later. To stand by and watch your loved one spiral even deeper into some dark hellish place, waiting days and weeks for a slow court process, while they suffer when there is help, compounds the nightmare, and worst of all causes the patient and the patient's family to suffer longer.

Signed,

Lydia Vorsteveld

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Bridport, Vermont