

To the Senate Health & Welfare Committee

February 11, 2014

Enclosed is testimony from my son Tony Gotavaskas about S.287. He has been committed and on court orders for forced drugging many times in the past seven years. He wanted to come to the Statehouse and testify against S.287 but since he is still confined in the Middlesex secure residential facility he was not able to attend the public hearing. If it is too late for him to testify by speaker phone please accept this short written statement, which he asked me to hand deliver to you.

I am his mother and I have watched him struggle with the mental health system since he was labeled ADHD at age 2. I don't think the drugs have been helpful to him. I have seen them dull his mind and harm his physical health. I have seen him become paranoid from taking the drugs.

There are so many avenues to get into Vermont's mental health system and too few to get out of it. I want my son back, out of the system and off the drugs. I want him living the life he used to lead before this revolving door of involuntary commitment and forced drugging, which has become a permanent imposition. Speeding it up is not a solution at all. His civil rights need to be protected. I want him to have more choices, not less. As a mother I ask you, please do not pass this bill.

Thank you for listening.

Respectfully yours,



Susan Shephard

The truth about Psychiatric Institutions

I'm writing this letter in order to elucidate the facts about institutions like the brattleboro retreat, and what was the state hospital in waterbury and how they serve multi-billion, during a stay at the brattleboro retreat I was heavily drugged in the d/isa unit. One time I was injected for just pacing in my small room, and I was injected three days in a row for doing nothing barely. While I was at the waterbury state hospital they coerced me into taking the risperidol injection called consta. I was in my early twenties. They said they would not release me from the hospital unless I started taking the risperidol consta. The doctor I was assigned was munson.

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When I was young they convinced my mother I had ADHD because I was an overly active child. So I was forced to take Ritalin during 6th grade and middle school. I think this is very common, early diagnosis are set in stone, which creates a path of forced drugging and coercion tactics by institutions. I've also been in the Rutland state hospital and CVHC. These drugs are terrible for your body and eventually gave me diabetes. But they are approved for use by the government. They're very dangerous drugs. All these institutions want to do is control people. That's what I've learned from being in the system so long.

Anthony Botavaskas