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Testimony on
SB 731 and HB 615
Friday, January 28, 2011

Aloha Legislators:

I wish to submit testimony for SB 731 and HB 615. Adult Mental Health Department appears to not know what it is doing. The department has gone from limiting time with patients to 3.5 hours per month, to now unlimited number of hours. Patients have varying needs. The amount of time will be different for each person. It is an individualized case management determination. To say that the department shall not limit the number of hours devoted to individual patients is to swing to the opposite end of what they said two years ago when they limited the number of hours to 3.5 per month for every patient. In other words, two years ago they were "penny wise and a pound foolish". I support the language in the bill to read, "Individual patient service shall be based upon the level of function and need of the patient and not upon initial pre-determined limitation of service hours."

If we are about developing communities of people, if we are about a "New Day in Hawai'i", we must not employ only trained professionals, clinical social workers. Wai'anae citizens have continuously over thirty years worked with the Department of Health and now the University of Manoa, and Community Colleges and requested that training of para-professionals be the ladder communities have access to climb out of poverty and solve our own social problems. This bill should support the development of people in their own communities to be hired at a para-professional level. I submit the addition of the use of terms "para-professionals following the term "professionals".

Here we go again. The Department of Health cuts all ACT programs in the State of Hawai'i in December of 2008. Now they want to restore the ACT programs. I support the reinstating of the ACT programs to the level that it was before it was cut. The ACT programs should never have been cut. The ACT Programs are an intensive monitoring in and by communities of para-professionals who know the patients who have high-end needs, providing an organized accountable, mobile mental health team who function interchangeably to provide the treatment, rehabilitation, and support services that persons with severe mental illnesses need to live successfully in the community. The community para-professionals know their communities, the clients and families and are able to respond 24-7 to their needs in lieu of hospitalization. I submit the addition of the use of terms "para-professional following the term "professional".

If amending the definition of "serious mental illness" to "Severe mental illness" limits the eligible diagnosis of patients for mental health services, and therefore limits access to mental health services, I object to this bill. Decisions that are only influenced by political and economic factors sometimes make us do strange things, like reduced access.

Ho'oiipo DeCambra, M.Ed.
Wai'anae Coast Community Mental Health Center

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