

This, to the best of my recollection, is a summary of the oral testimony that I gave before the Joint Hearing of the Senate Health Committee and the Committee on Human Services on Monday, January 28, 2013 regarding SB 310.

My name is Fredda Sullam. I am the mother of a 58-year-old man who suffers from schizophrenia. My husband and I have been taking care of him for over forty years. My son became ill when he was around seventeen. We have managed to give him the semblance of a decent life until October 2009 at which time, while under the care of Care Hawaii, he needed to have his medications adjusted. Care Hawaii failed to do what was necessary in this vital task. As a result he became floridly psychotic and has remained so ever since.

Now he has long grey dirty hair, an enormous dirty grey beard, a generally disheveled appearance and swollen feet. He smells of urine and perspiration. He wanders in the streets or rides the buses aimlessly all day. He neglects his personal hygiene by not bathing often and not ever brushing his teeth. He neglects his general health by not taking medications prescribed when he was discharged the Queens Hospital's Cardiac Unit after he had a heart attack on August 31, 2012. He also ignores the dietary recommendations he received. He refuses to see an oral surgeon who recommended the extraction of four seriously deteriorated teeth. The long range implications are a diseased jaw and, most likely, the loss of all of his teeth. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, my son shouts at the top of his lungs at at his imaginary "voices". His neighbors have complained to me. There was nothing I could do to alleviate the problem.

Fortunately medical science has provided us with medications that restore some semblance of normalcy to the brain. Unfortunately, under Hawaii's current laws people in a psychotic condition are expected to ask for help. They are also expected to understand the necessity for taking the medications. However they do not have the insight to do so. All too often one hears from people in psychosis: "I'm OK. There is nothing wrong with me." Only after properly and carefully administered medication which restores the ill person's brain to more normal functioning can they exercise their civil rights and enjoy their human rights.

In all the years that I have been advocating for ill people like my son, I have met many mothers who are still caring for their adult children. The Hawaiian statutes prevent them, as they prevent me, from getting their children into proper treatment.

I strongly support SB 310 because it gives a seriously mentally ill person an opportunity to receive desperately needed treatment without having to go through the criminal justice system.

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PS Please feel free to call me or e-mail me if you have any questions.