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From: [REDACTED]

On April 21, 2004, I tried to have my bi-polar son admitted to Western Psych in Pittsburgh and Armstrong County Hospital in Kittaning, Pa. due to his bizarre behavior. He had been hospitalized several times in the previous two years and was on and off his medications. The psych nurse from Armstrong County spent over one hour trying to persuade him to voluntarily commit himself but he adamantly refused. She was very sympathetic to my pleas and even had his records from a recent previous stay at the very same hospital.

She painfully explained to me that the present Mental Practice Law prevented her from helping me. With great sadness and frustration, at midnight, I drove him to our home which was two hours away in Johnstown, Cambria County.

At 3 A.M. in the morning we finally had our son admitted to Connemaugh Memorial Hospital with a self-inflicted 10" stab wound to his abdomen. This time they HAD to admit him in spite of our current antiquated Mental Practice Law. He survived but only through the grace of God.

After life saving surgery by the trauma surgeons and many days in the surgical ward and then three days in the psych ward (all under suicide watch), my son was discharged UNDER HIS OWN CARE and without the hospital psychiatrist even notifying his own psychiatrist. His personal psychiatrist, as well as ourselves were dumb founded by this seemingly unexplainable action. Of course it was dictated by the current law which prevents the hospital from involuntary commitment after 3 days. This, in spite of his own actions which which was the ultimate in dangerousness to one's self!!

I only hoped that our current laws would have permitted him to be admitted earlier on that fateful evening based upon his history, behavior and our very close monitoring. Not only would an enormous sum of monies would have been saved by the commonwealth, but even more importantly, this very ill person would have been saved the constant memory of that horrific evening including the post traumatic stress that still exists to this very day.

It is absolutely incumbent upon our Pennsylvania legislators to pass new legislation, e.g. SB 226 (similar to Kendra's law in N.Y) that reflects similar modernized legislation being passed throughout the country in the past ten or so years to help protect the sickest of our mentally ill.

Richard Gross, Johnstown, PA

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