
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, September 23, 2007 10:20 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: SB226 Hearing

Please share this story with the hearing committee.

I would like to paint you a picture! Before my son Louie, now 32 years old, was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia four years ago he was like many other young men. Maybe even like your own sons. He was so handsome and very personable. Louie was always well liked by both young and old. He was so smart, had such a great sense of humor and always had tons of friends. He grew up loving sports (which he excelled in), girls (which there was never a shortage of) and playing guitar. He was "special" in the way he treated people—all people—with respect and equality. He truly had it all—the full package. The possibilities for his future were unlimited. We had such dreams for Louie. What would he "grow up" to be? Well things started changing. The happy and easy going person Louie always was started changing. He became very paranoid and started saying very bizarre things. Then the delusions started. We, his family, knew something was terribly wrong. We tried desperately to get him help, but like so many other families we were thrown into a living nightmare—the **mental health system**. They said that they could not help us/him because he was not a danger to himself or others. We literally **begged** for help for him so many times only to be turned away. What they told us was, "he has a **RIGHT** to be **CRAZY**". Those were their exact words. As if when he was in his right mind, before his illness struck, when given the choice of being sane or crazy he would choose **CRAZY**. What do you think he would have chosen? What would you choose? Like any of us would ever choose insanity. **BUT** because of Louie's illness and the way it affects the brain he didn't think anything was wrong with him and refused treatment on his own. If **-IF-**they would have helped Louie in the early stages, I believe with **ALL MY HEART** that the ending to this tale would have been so very different. But as it goes—**Here is the "true" ending.**

Over a three year period, with very little help from the mental health system, I watched my BEAUTIFUL son go from:

Being a wonderful son who loved his family very much

Being a good husband and family man

Being an exceptional father to his young son and daughter (they just adored their daddy)

Being an honor student in college which he was attending on a GI Bill because of his military service. He had been in the U.S. Army where he was a member of the 82nd Airborne Unit and had a position of "high security clearance". Louie was promoted quickly through the ranks until he received a bad knee injury that ended his dreams of a military career.

He went from ALL these things to:

Losing his wife

Losing his children (they became very frightened of him)

He lost several apartments through evictions—Usually for bizarre behavior or non payment.

He lost the education that he was so proud to be receiving.

He lost his perfect credit score which was replaced with stacks of debt.

He lost **MANY-MANY** jobs.

He lost his desire to care for his own personal hygiene (he was almost unrecognizable).

He **hated** his family because we would not believe his delusions and his hallucinations. He hated us all.

He became **HOMELESS!**

Finally after three years into this, because of his delusions and hallucinations, he finally was to the point where they considered Louie a danger to others. We finally were able to get him real help. Having your son who you love beyond words involuntarily committed is something no parent should ever have to experience. To be the one responsible for having your child handcuffed and driven away while you just watch and cry, is pain like I had never known.....**BUT**.....on the other hand it was such a relief to know that he would no longer be tortured by his own mind. My son Louie now lives with my husband and myself. He sees his children every so often when I am able to get them and bring them up from South Carolina where they live with their mother. He has no friends anymore and he spends most of each day alone in his room. Louie is a **shadow of his former self**. My dreams for my son are so different than they once were. Now all I want for him is his safety and some happiness. Even the slightest bit of happiness. A simple smile from him is like a gift from heaven. Oh how I miss his bright cheerful self. You know one of the saddest things about all this is that it did not have to get this bad. Louie should not have lost so much before he received the help he needed. Would any of you even be able to imagine this happening to your beautiful child? Well it could. Mental illness does not discriminate. It can happen to ANYBODY at ANYTIME! **I implore you to pass SB226.** It may be too late for my son but it will help many good decent people to follow. Thank you for hearing "our" story and PLEASE pray for my son Louie.

Respectfully,
Peggy McGuirk