Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
DSS/DCF Testimony
Friday February 22nd, 2012
Kristen Tierney

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this hearing. My name is Kristen Tierney and I'm speaking **in Opposition to the Implementation of Step Therapy, under the Pharmacy Program**. I'm a lifelong caregiver of a non-custodial family member. I represent caregivers through my business Turtles & Lemonade and as an advocate for NAMI/Keep the Promise.

People diagnosed with a chronic mental illness cycle in and out of our mental health care system for a variety of reasons: the complexity of the brain; stopping meds; rejection of treatment; inability to pay for services or find services; insurance companies changing RXs and now possibly the state sanctioning this very dangerous and expensive practice.

Generics and Name Brand RX's aren't the same, that is a known fact. Their delivery system, binders and manufacture are different. My loved one, my family and this state paid a dear price when her insurance company switched her meds to a generic without her doctors nor her consent.

After over 40years of suffering and nearly 20yrs in and out of treatment my loved one accepted her diagnosis. As caregivers we know the warning signs of the deterioration in the delicate balance to the mental state of our loved ones.

A few years back, I noticed the warning signs occurring again; lack of sleep; racing mind; drastic diet change back to junk food (self-medication); inability to clearly articulate a thought, etc. I was perplexed. She was happily working, around a great supportive group of people; she was in therapy, following her plan and on her meds.

I had to fight to get her insurance company to allow her to get into the hospital for a med check, convince her to go and beg her to sign herself in. My life stopped. Her life stopped. I had to get a medical proxy to get her into the hospital once she agreed to go. Her insurance company didn't want to cover this. She lost four months of her productive life. Her hospitalization cost her job; she's been unemployed ever since. ***A @$22.00 savings to the insurance company has now costs the state, herself and her family how many tens of thousands of dollars? All because an administrator at her insurance changed her medication to a generic company not a licensed physician, not her Doctor.***

The state has no business playing with my loved ones brain and life and neither do insurance companies. Insurance premiums go up, these companies post record profits while

cutting services that *are* 'covered'. **I go to Doctors for medical advise, not an insurance company and not my legislators.**

It's bad enough that **I have to fight my loved ones private insurance company for care, do I need to add the state to this battle to? I will if I have to,** because I have a loved one who depends on me and can't fight for herself.

There is no end to our states legal culpability if you legislate my loved ones medical care.

My name is Kristen Tierney, I'm a caregiver and I'm not going away.