

Joshua Seavey
Bi Partisan Task Force On Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety
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To the Bi Partisan Task Force On Gun Violence Prevention. My name is Joshua Seavey. I live in Stratford, CT. I'm writing you today to respectfully ask that you take a stand against proposed legislation that would limit access to mental health services for young adults. I am particularly opposed to legislation in favor of outpatient commitment. As a young adult with a psychiatric diagnosis I feel this legislation is a violation of the right to seek mental health treatment or any health treatment for that matter in the way we feel is best for us.

I speak from personal experience. Since my diagnosis I have been hospitalized three times for symptoms related to my diagnosis. Each time I have been required to go to Intensive Outpatient Therapy as part of my treatment plan for a certain period of time. I never had the option of just seeing a psychiatrist and a therapist one on one. I was never comfortable with the limited options that I had. Different treatment methods work for different people and each individual should have the right to pursue treatment in the way they feel is best for them. I for one prefer one on one therapy as opposed to group therapy. I never got alot out of group therapy because I'm a private person and do not feel comfortable discussing alot of things on a group level. Group therapy worked for me in some ways but for the most part I have always preferred speaking to just one person in a confidential setting rather than a group. Many other young adults in recovery feel the same way and I believe we all should have a choice as to how we pursue our treatment especially post hospitalization. I voluntarily committed myself every time I was hospitalized. Why shouldn't I be able to choose whether or not I receive outpatient treatment or treatment outside of hospitalization at all for that matter It should all be entirely our choice.

If legislation is proposed to limit options to mental health treatment especially for young adults and force people to comply with treatment plans that may or may not be in their best interest, it could significantly hinder recovery for many young adults as many of us could re-hospitalized simply because we weren't on the right treatment plan or because we have stopped taking our medication due to intolerable side effects. A perfect example of the latter is a couple personal experiences I've had where I've intolerable physical side effects to certain medications I've taken. Fortunately I was able to stop taking them properly and change my medication properly with the help of certain doctors and therapists. But not everyone is fortunate enough. Not all doctors can be trusted and some people are continuously prescribed improper medication and have not had a choice in the matter when they've been hospitalized and may not have had a choice when they were in outpatient treatment. I know from experience that side effects can be fatal because I could have died from the last medication that I had horrible side effects from. My heart rate kept elevating more and more during my last hospitalization because of the medication I was taking and they only realized something was wrong when I was sent to get an EKG at 27 years old. So people's lives can be endangered from taking the wrong medications.

If stepping on the rights of mental health patients doesn't result in physical illness or death it can result in many of us being re-hospitalized and this could become a financial burden on the state because many of us have state insurance such as Medicaid, Medicare etc. So it doesn't save the state any money in the long run and it certainly doesn't help alot of people in recovery. In fact it

can result in unnecessary hospitalizations and possibly improper medication prescriptions which can be very dangerous as I've said.

On top of all that outpatient commitment is illogical. With all due respect to 12 step programs its like forcing an alcoholic or drug addict to go to AA or NA to stay clean and sober. These are not the only ways to stay clean and sober and alcoholics and addicts in recovery have the freedom to work on their sobriety how they see fit. Why shouldn't young adults and all people in recovery from mental illness, many of whom are dually diagnosed have the same freedom with respect to their recovery? It really is just common sense. If legislation is proposed to allow everyone in recovery to be responsible for their own treatment it saves the state money and may be saving lives as well. Therefore I strongly urge you all to stand against legislation for outpatient commitment or anything else that infringes on the rights of anybody in recovery. It is just simply the right thing to do.