

Evan Silverman testimony on HB19-1044
February 21st, 2019

I am here today in part to testify in favor of House Bill 19-1044. This is my story:

There were five of us in the advanced reading group in kindergarten. Three of those children ended up at Harvard and one at the University of Texas, followed by medical school at Stanford. I was not one of them.

I graduated from Cherry Creek High School and decided on the University of Oregon for college. A diploma hanging in my room today is a reminder that although I stumbled to the finish line I did graduate from the University of Oregon.

When I Returned to Denver in the Summer of 1996, I had symptoms of mania at first and then was hit with a crippling depression. I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and was in and out of the hospital several times as I moved into the fall of 1996. Nothing seemed to help. A family friend recommended Dr. Lowenstein who practiced at the University Hospital. He took control of my care and had a vision about how to treat me.

While in a room at University Hospital I noticed some flies trapped between a double pane glass window. Some of them were alive and some dead. I felt empathy for those flies. The hardest part of the journey was when I couldn't sleep for 2 straight days. Every second felt like an eternity. It was total hell. Dr. Lowenstein said he had never seen anyone so depressed and he recommended ETC- electroconvulsive therapy (shock treatments). With help of ECT and the high quality care I received from him, I was able to come out of the depression. He saved my life.

Over the course of my life I have really enjoyed volunteering and in early 1997 I volunteered at University Hospital in the Transport Department.

In the fall of 1997, I started working at the well known Tattered Cover Bookstore, a place I love. I am currently taking a little time away from the store and hope to return sooner rather than later.

In 1999 I became gravely disabled due to my mental illness. Folks at the Tattered Cover called my parents to express their alarm. I called my Dad and we agreed to meet at a Village Inn. I did this partly because I knew in the deepest part of my soul my Dad would act in my best interest and that I needed his help.

I arrived at the restaurant first and when a customer entered, I thought he was with the FBI so I ran out. I met my Dad and said, we gotta get out of here! It is not safe. Prior to meeting my dad at the restaurant he had called the University Hospital to see about bringing me in to be admitted. They told him to first take me to their Emergency Room so my Dad drove me there.

Although I was in rough shape in the Emergency Room I was comforted to be back at the hospital where I had received high quality treatment, continued therapy with Dr. Lowenstein, and had also volunteered.

At that time Dr. Lowenstein was on a three-week vacation in Europe and couldn't be reached. Since my doctor was unreachable and the insurance plan under which I was covered would pay for 90% of

my care at a different hospital and 80% at the University Hospital a decision was made by the insurance company to transport me via ambulance to the other hospital.

The care I received at that facility was less than ideal. The doctor put me on no mood stabilizers even with a past diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder partly because there were some difficulties in getting my medical records transferred. That problem might have been lessened if the doctor had been interested in engaging with my parents. He was not. Furthermore there was little communication between that doctor and the one covering for Dr. Lowenstein at University Hospital. Among other things, due to my symptoms at that time, I was in the isolation room for 13 days.

Once Dr. Lowenstein returned he had me transferred to back to University Hospital. Between the other hospital and University Hospital I was hospitalized for a total of two months. It was at this time when my diagnosis was changed to Schizophrenia.

If I had completed a Psychiatric Advance Directive when I was not in crisis I could have stated among other things that I would like to be treated at the University Hospital by Dr. Lowenstein. Had I been directly admitted there from the ER my length of stay would probably have been much shorter than two months and I would certainly not have spent 13 days in isolation.

While my story has similarities to others with mental health disorders, each person is unique. Unlike a condition like Athlete's Foot which has very limited symptoms and straight forward treatment, mental health disorders require special attention as various symptoms present themselves differently over time for each patient.

Each person with a mental health issue has at least some insight into themselves and a Psychiatric Advance Directive will help guide providers about how to best treat a patient who for whatever reason can't communicate or make choices at the time. It would also enable the best individualized treatment plan to be readily available for any clinician called to see a mental health patient in distress.

It is within this context that I fully support House Bill 19-1044. This bill will help both patients and doctors achieve many more positive outcomes.