

Hi Jenny,

I am so very sorry for your family's loss. Thank you for your work on policy change. Here are a few thoughts.

I am a Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker & Licensed Clinical Addiction Counselor licensed in the state of Kansas and I support these bills.

I worked in the "systems" where insurance dictated treatment for 15 years before leaving and solely practicing privately to have freedom from the dysfunctional insurance-based system.

I do not accept insurance and my clients pay me out of pocket for individual therapy. I refuse to allow insurance to control the valuable services I provide my clients. It has been a waste of my time & resources in the past to advocate to utilization reviewers at insurance companies (who have no direct contact with clients) to fight for needed mental health care where it is micro-managed and frequently declined.

While working in a local ER for 8 years, time and time again there were clients who "fell through the cracks." Unfortunately in several occasions, lives were lost due to insurance denying services. Kristi's death is certainly significant but unfortunately is more common than one may want to believe. I remember hearing about clients who died after being seen in the ER & denied admission while others were discharged too soon from inpatient care and then completed suicide.

One very common client type was the opioid dependent. Withdrawing from opioids often did not meet criteria for a medical detox so they would often be discharged from the ER with community based resources. Without having needed medication support to detox, opioid use would continue because there was no accessible resources in place to help them with sobriety & recovery. We have a well known opioid crisis in America that certainly has many factors at play. Eliminating the insurance stronghold on dictating treatment is one piece this legislation could address.

As trained & experienced mental health professionals, we need to be given the ability to provide care needed to many struggling with mental health & substance use issues without insurance interference or more lives will certainly be lost to this greedy, dysfunctional system.

Thank you,

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