

Dear Policy Makers:

Please vote in favor of the B2281. A few years ago, an adult daughter of a close friend of mine was taken to jail instead of the emergency room. Around the holidays she was having a depression episode that a family member did not understand as a mental health issue. The person insisted she participate in the gathering. The family member kept at it, provoking her to get angry and she started fighting back. The family member called 911 to report her. The police came and took her to jail. The police in this small Kansas town had not had training in recognizing mental illness. Her parents pleaded with the officers to take her to the hospital instead of jail. They did not listen. She was crying, put in handcuffs. She spent the night humiliated and frightened. She had to wear a suit without her undergarments. She slept on a hard surface. A shoulder injury from a past car accident was hurting. She was sobbing. A friendly cell mate told her not to cry or the others would ridicule her. She was also warned not to set down the roll of toilet paper she had been given or it would get stolen. She spent the night not knowing whether she would be released. The family member decided not to press charges, so she was released. If an emergency number could have been called by the parents when the episode was escalating this daughter would have escaped the nightmare. Her parents did have nightmares after that. I'm assuming their daughter did too. Fortunately, the daughter has a good job and can get continued treatment for her depression, but this incident should never have happened. Mental health issues are so misunderstood. Therefore, I support this bill. My husband and I have an adopted granddaughter with Borderline Personality Disorder. Between the ages of 13 and 15 we had to call the police 5 times to get us all calmed down. Praise God that when we called 911 the first responders (in Wichita) who had been trained by NAMI and other mental health specialists came to our door and helped. They did not threaten or make things worse. We located information and counseling. Had my granddaughter been arrested she would have been in the juvenile center and most likely gotten worse. Please help those of us who have mental illness in the family. Thank you to the National Alliance on Mental Illness Wichita Chapter, and the Wichita Police Department.

Respectfully submitted, Dotty Hellman