



Testimony in support of Senate Bill 823:

George A. Keepers, M.D. Carruthers Professor and Chair,  
Department of Psychiatry Oregon Health and Science University

Chair Mones-Anderson and members of the committee,

MEASURE: SB 823  
EXHIBIT: 13  
S. HEALTHCARE & HUMAN SERVICES  
DATE: 4/9/13 PAGES: 1  
SUBMITTED BY: DR. George Keepers

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on behalf of Oregon Health and Science University in support of Senate Bill 823. I had the opportunity to be present when Senator Courtney was recognized by NAMI with the Gordon and Sharon Smith New Freedom Award for his contributions to mental health care in Oregon. Senator Courtney has a long and distinguished record of support for the treatment of individuals who suffer with severe psychiatric illness. This bill is another significant step forward in providing desperately needed services for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

The services in SB 823 focus a great deal of attention on Oregon's youth. SB 823 provides for psychosis prevention, detection and treatment services for young adults aged 15 to 25, which is the period of greatest vulnerability to the development of severe psychiatric illness. Services proposed are evidence-based and desperately needed. Prevention programs of this kind have demonstrated enormous value in Australia and in pilot programs in the United States and here in Oregon. The expansion of these programs to our entire young adult population will prevent and relieve suffering and conserve resources by reducing the need for very expensive hospital and residential treatment.

The support in this bill for school-based health centers and improved collaboration between schools and community mental health programs is also desperately needed in Oregon. The range and depth of services to be provided by SB 823 will bring critically needed expansion for our children. If implemented these services will certainly result in the improved mental health of our children and decreased delinquent behavior reducing the burden on our school and judicial systems.

Included in SB 823 are proposals to establish consultation services for primary care physicians, especially pediatricians, that would allow them to access child psychiatrists to assist them with the care of their patients who are less than 18 years of age. Additionally training for primary care physicians in screening for adolescent depression is proposed. The creation of a center for technical assistance in the psychotherapeutic method of Collaborative Problem Solving is also required. All of these ideas are supported by scientific evidence showing strong effectiveness. They have been implemented and shown to be effective in other states and I believe they will prove very effective here in Oregon.

In summary, I want to express OHSU's strong support for this legislation. SB 823 uses evidence based services and treatments to address many of the key deficiencies of our current mental health system. I have worked in mental health and our state for the course of my entire career. Like others in my field, I have been frustrated by the failure of our mental health system to implement clinical practices that are known to prevent and relieve suffering and to save money.

SB 823 captures the essence of what is needed. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of this bill.