

Date: March 25, 2015

TO: Co-Chairs Nathanson and Bates

Joint committee on Ways and Means- Subcommittee on Human Services

FROM: Michael Haines

Lane County Resident

Peer Support Worker

PeaceHealth EASA and Hub Programs

My name is Michael Haines. I am a graduate of the early intervention psychosis program called E.A.S.A. EASA saved my life. I wandered through life nearly a year and half prior to entering the program in complete despair. I was hurtling rapidly in a downward spiral full of fear, depression, paranoia, anxiety and self-loathing. I was completely alone losing a battle no one understood and I hated myself for it. I still remember the time during my psychosis episode. I hadn't been sleeping and when my mom woke up the next morning naturally she showed great concern. She convinced me to go to the emergency room. I'm sure you're aware that waiting to be seen at the ER isn't a quick process and they charge you for every minute of it. After all that time of waiting and talking with a crisis counselor, they turned me away. They said, "There's nothing we can do here for you." Imagine being in the worst crisis of your life and then be told that you can't be helped. I went home still in full psychosis. My mom then again convinced me to visit another hospital in a neighboring town. That's where I was introduced to E.A.S.A.

There was a point in time where I thought I'd live in my mother's basement for the rest of my life. For quite a while I wouldn't leave my room for more than an hour a day. I was trapped in fear, isolated from everyone and everything. Without E.A.S.A. I don't think I'd be here today. The clinicians in the program were all so caring and gave me the tools that have helped me become successful. The day I left the program was harder for me than when I entered. Not because I was in a bad place or wasn't ready, but because the clinicians and workers had become what felt like an extended family. I have the opportunity now to work with young adults as a peer support specialist in the EASA and young adult hub programs. The hub is as great of a program as EASA. It's designed mainly to give young adults a chance who by standards don't have much of a chance. It's for Young Adults that are at a barrier to other mental health services or may have flunked out from other providers. These are people that have been given up on and are expected to spend the rest of their lives in the system. I have the opportunity to see first-hand how great the young adult hub is and how grateful the participants and families are for such an opportunity.

Oregon has been a leader in mental health services, pushing boundaries and paving the path for other states. They look to us because we have great programs such as these that have helped not only save lives, but time and money. They have made living worth it for me and many other folks as well. Thank you for helping to make this a possibility through your commitment to families and for making Oregon such a great state. I am proud to be a part of that and it's an honor to be able to testify before you.