

SCR 11 Acceptance Speech

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Senate Committee on Rules
Chair Sen. Diane Rosenbaum
Vice-Chair Sen. Ted Ferrioli
Sen. Lee Beyer
Sen. Brian Boquist
Sen. Ginny Burdick

Chair Rosenbaum, Vice-Chair Ferrioli and Senators Beyer, Boquist and Burdick:

It is a great honor to sit before you to humbly thank you for this moving recognition of my work on behalf of mental health. I want to particularly extend my gratitude to Senator Boquist and his former colleague, Representative Jim Thompson, for this resolution. It is the commitment of legislators like Sen. Boquist and Rep. Thompson that give hope and optimism to Oregonians who, like me, find their lives affected by mental illness.

I am loathe to accept recognition for something my parents taught me is simply the right thing to do. I am honored to do so, however, on behalf of those who live with mental illness and their families. I am a person who gets out of bed in the morning and after coffee and an Ibuprofen, is ready for the day. But I know too many who must grit their teeth to face the day's routines – the mothers, fathers sisters, brothers, and children whose stomachs churn when they get a message of "I need help," the sister who can't locate her ill brother, the father whose son struggles with mental illness is jailed, or worst of all, the parents whose daughter ended her life.

The many Oregonians who experience the private pain of mental illness need you, their legislators, to promote conditions that foster mental health. This year during our annual NAMI Lobby Day, NAMI members remarked that you, our elected officials, knew much more about mental illnesses than in years past. Collectively, we have all learned more about improving mental health.

First, housing. There is nothing that makes an individual feel as secure as a home address. Second, a dependable, comprehensive health care system. Such a system must include crisis care for acute episodes of illnesses – acute care must always be available because waiting hours or days is as detrimental to recovery from a mental health crisis as it would be to a person having a stroke. Third a justice system that provides treatment instead of isolation for people living with serious mental illness. Mental Health Courts such as the one in Yamhill County have successfully diverted persons in the criminal justice system into treatment that leads to recovery.

When I moved to Oregon 51 years ago, my daddy who was born in Lebanon, beamed and stated that Oregon was the best governed state in The Union. I share that belief. Your attention and support of bills that will improve housing, health care, and justice will help ensure that Oregon citizens who live with mental illness can live productively and with dignity in our great state.

Thank you again, for the honor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 11.

Sincerely,

