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To: [JWMHS Exhibits](#)
Subject: Oregon State Hospital Junction City
Date: Wednesday, March 08, 2017 11:14:01 AM

Testimony to Joint Ways and Means Human Services Sub-Committee

March 8, 2017; Oregon State Hospital - Junction City

Thank you for allowing me to testify regarding the possible closure of the Oregon State Hospital in Junction City. I do not envy your task. Due to the projected shortfall in revenue, I understand difficult budgetary decisions are necessary. Every constituent who expresses an opinion will be striving to influence you to save a particular item from the budget ax. I will be no different.

As a short introduction, I have been a resident of Oregon for over 20 years. My opinion regarding the hospital at Junction City stems from the fact that one of my sons is currently a patient there. Nearly 1.5 years ago, my son assaulted me severely while suffering a psychotic episode due to paranoid schizophrenia. Our family had walked with our son through the last decade of his progressive mental decline, including periods of incarceration, homelessness, attempts at getting help, and increasing psychosis and paranoia. After the attack, we have followed him from his initial incarceration at Lane County Jail, then to OSH in Salem for assessment and initial treatment, then back to Lane County Jail while the legal process continued, and finally at OSH-Junction City. Our experiences are not hypothetical nor speculative, but are quite real and actual.

Our family has a different perspective than most, in that both my wife and I are health care providers: LuAnn is a licensed professional counselor whose private practice consists of clients with emotional and mental health disorders; I am a gastroenterologist. Therefore, we are engaged in the health care community and are comfortable with issues regarding both medical and mental health care.

We were deeply concerned when Gov. Brown's draft budget included the closure of OSH-JC. Our son was found Guilty Except for Insanity, and was remanded to the PSRB. He has been at OSH-JC for the last 8 months with progressive improvement throughout due to the excellent care and the use of medications. His hallucinations have stopped; he no longer feels paranoia; his mood is appropriately animated; he is engaged and hopeful. In my opinion, he is the best mentally than he has been in over 10 years! His future is much brighter now than before the attack.

Due to the severity of the attack, he is felt to be a risk to me and others. His GEI status limits the options where he can stay - only at a secure inpatient facility, such as OSH in Salem or Junction City. If Junction City were shuttered, all GEI patients, like my son, would be housed at OSH Salem only, which already is at full capacity. Where would GEI patients go then?

Gov. Brown has proposed that inpatients would be transferred to Secure Residential Treatment Facilities in the community. Unfortunately, there is an undersupply of SRTFs currently, and a costly multi-year process is involved in opening SRTFs. This would not be a viable option in the short term due to this lack of availability, nor ever for anyone with GEI status who is felt to be a risk to others.

As is painfully obvious, individuals with mental health problems are disproportionately represented in both our penal system, as well as among the homeless. Taken as a group, our penal system is the single largest provider of mental health care in the state of Oregon. It is highly likely that if JC hospital were closed, people with serious mental health disorders would end up in jail or prison instead, where they would receive rudimentary care; or they would be back on the streets without treatment.

During my son's time in Lane County Jail, he was placed in protective solitary confinement. This allowed him only 1 hour outside his cell daily, during which time he could only walk around an internal common area. 23 hours a day were spent in his cell completely alone; this would drive even "normal" people insane. He received basic psychiatric medications which restored him to some degree of functionality, but did not lead to complete remission. Nearly everyone would agree that incarceration is not the best treatment plan for those with mental health problems, yet I am certain that this will be the outcome for many if JC is closed.

Often we consider the consequences of decisions in the abstract. However, slashing budgets statewide will have real and actual consequences for real and actual people. The decisions you make will have profound ramifications for all Oregonians, who are trusting you to make the best decisions.

Out of compassion for those with dangerous mental health disorders, I strongly urge you to keep Junction City hospital open.

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