

Mr. Kyle A. Shields – Testimony

After having been a patient at Cedar Hills Hospital, one does not require a career in the medical field to grasp the overwhelming requirement for mental health and addiction support services. Considering myself a “product” of Cedar Hills, to which I reflect upon one year of sobriety and continued, sound mental health, there is a real requirement for expansion in this geographical area.

The toll of military service cannot be weighed with standard units of measure; some service members have the inherent disposition to take-on whatever is required of them, move about through life and not have an issue with their mental health or addictions. So few of us can relate to the aforementioned line, but such is reality. I claim ownership in the latter, and without the overwhelming support, endless effort, love, kindness and flexibility shown by the entire staff at Cedar Hills, Military Program; I cannot imagine where I would have wound up.

One thing, in particular, not requiring a microscope to examine, is the amount of required bed space to accommodate such a rampant issue. Upon my arrival to Cedar Hills, I spent nearly half of my stay in the “civilian” section of the hospital. Notwithstanding, the type of care demonstrated downstairs was second-to-none when compared to the care received once I moved upstairs. Being housed with fellow service members added a layer of care, protection and invitation that one is just unable to receive when committing themselves to in-patient care. In fact, I feel that, all other variables being constant, it was the one additive which helped me succeed to such a great extent that I will never have another drink the rest of my life and continue to help those in need – as they did for me.

Fortunately, Oregon has an opportunity to address this requirement and supply more inpatient beds: Senate Bill 1054. This bill would streamline the process of building much needed mental health facilities for veterans, active duty service members, and their families. I say, with confidence and experience, there is a demand for military-specific mental health programs and SB 1054 would help meet that demand.

All veterans and service members deserve the quality care I received at Cedar Hills. The passage of SB 1054 would help provide a variety of needed mental health services. The bill will help service members, like myself, make a full and meaningful recovery. I can assure the committee there is a valid requirement for additional mental health services for veterans and I encourage them to vote the bill out of committee. The type of effort and care that Cedar Hills gave me should have the ability to reach an even greater population of our nation’s service members, with the environment and care they deserve.



KYLE A. SHIELDS
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