

HB 3355A Testimony in Opposition

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Education
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To Co-chairs Senator Monroe, Representative Smith -Warner, Members of the
Subcommittee :

I am here to voice my opposition to psychologists being able to prescribe medication to persons with psychiatric disabilities. I serve as Senior Director of Peer and Wellness Services at Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, although my testimony today is as a private citizen.

I have personally taken psychiatric medications for most of the past forty years in which they have been prescribed to treat my schizophrenia and depression. During this time I have accumulated significant experience with the often grave and life altering side-effects that psychiatric medications have. The side-effects have been profound and have interfered with my health and quality of life.

As a person who lives with a serious and persistent psychiatric diagnosis, I am frankly very scared by the idea of these drugs being prescribed by clinicians who have not had at the very least the amount of training that a physician's assistant or nurse practitioner have. I personally have two friends who either died or are now awaiting organ transplant because of the damage done by taking their prescribed psychiatric medication. These drugs effect much more than individuals' brains and are presently implicated as one of the reasons that persons with mental illness die at an average rate of 25 years earlier than the general population. (National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. 2008). I fear that this dire statistic will even be worse when unqualified clinicians are able to prescribe.

As a person with a severe mental illness, it is my hope that someday I will be able to live without relying on psychiatric medication. This is a dream that is shared by many of my peers. Non-pharmacologic interventions are possible, but will not be made accessible if we put our resources and energies into so called "solutions" such as HB 3355A. We sorely need to incentivize psychologists to develop and offer non -pharmacologic solutions.

Also, I am deeply aware that if this bill passes, my peers and I will not be afforded the same protections that persons of other disabling health conditions enjoy.

We deserve better than this!!!! To do less is to perpetuate the prejudice and discrimination that I and others frequently encounter.

Please say no to this prejudicial and discriminatory proposed legislation!

Thank you,

Meghan Caughey