

From: Linnea Stenhouse
To: [JWMHS Exhibits](#)
Subject: Testimony on OHA Budget -Mental Health.
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Co-chairs Steiner-Hayward, Rayfield, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the OHA Health Systems Division portion of your budget. My name is Linnea Stenhouse with SASS, the Solidarity Alliance of Social Services, I am a QMHP (Qualified Mental Health Professional) at Lifeworks NW. I work with adolescents and young adults experiencing their first psychotic break. I provide therapy, case management, and family support to these young folks during a crucial time in their development. We are a community-based program, which means that I am able to provide support to wherever the young person feels safe and comfortable, which is often in their homes. I also help families support their loved ones through psycho-education, therapy, and mediation. Our services combat isolation, prevents institutionalization, and supports these young people to stay out of hospitals and jails, and instead pursue school and meaningful career paths.

My position has the flexibility and support to do intensive suicide intervention with these young people, and I have successfully supported several adolescents and young adults to choose life instead of ending their own lives. These programs not only provide long-term cost savings, but are quite literally lifesaving. Access to mental health treatment does not just impact individuals but impacts the individuals and institutions they are connected to, and then our entire community.

Mental Health does not discriminate, it affects all corners of our society. No family or community is immune. We know from research that untreated mental health symptoms lead to all kinds of unfortunate outcomes for individuals, families, and communities- increases in incarceration, increases in homelessness, and increases in inpatient hospitalizations, where people sometimes wait 48 hours in the Emergency Department for needed mental health treatment.

Access to quality mental health care is absolutely crucial. The Community mental health funded by the OHA Health Systems Division Mental Health Budget, is not just a nice idea, it is preventative, it is life changing, and it is life-saving. I see this in real time every day.

I know when the young people I work with graduate my program and go on to start college, a new internship, or maybe JobCorps, they are amazingly resilient and strong. I also know that they will need to continue to be connected to accessible mental health care provided by this funding, in order to maintain stability. Without reliable access to therapy, medication, case management, they are at risk of becoming increasingly vulnerable and unwell.

Please remember that funding community mental health is serving the most vulnerable folks in our community who are facing a mountain of obstacles. We need more access to care, not less. Please raise revenue to ensure that these programs are funded and maintained.