

Submitter: Meghan Carlson
On Behalf Of:
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Measure: SB1507

I am a counselor and case manager with Benton County Behavioral Health's Assertive Community Treatment Team. As a clinician who has worked in this community for the past decade, I know that the clients we serve are in need of those public guardians that can assist them in getting the often life saving treatment needed. I would like to tell the story of an individual and how her guardian helped us to save her life. After years of stability, she was reintroduced to substances, and quickly lost her housing after her Severe and Persistent Mental Illness prevented her from being able to fully engage and utilize the ACT supports she is entitled to. I had to work with her for nearly two years while she was houseless in the community, often using substances she had no idea what they were, incredibly psychotic and not connected to reality, and repeatedly being raped and taken advantage of while in this state. She could barely use any of the resources in the community because these concerns created behavioral disturbances. When I would have her assessed for risk of harm, she would continually not meet the threshold because she knew where to get food (from dumpsters) and could locate water. Finally, she was evaluated for Oregon Public Guardianship after the program received funding, and we began working with one of the guardians. She was an amazing advocate for her and partnered with myself and my team to find her the best placement. Even with the barriers inherent in finding such a place, this guardian was able to get her to go to the Emergency Department with her willingly, and waited with us for hours until she could go back and be placed on a hold. We were able to have her accepted into a secure setting where, last I had heard, she was doing quite well and sounding back to baseline. If we could not access this guardian service, my client could not even access her own funds or sign releases due to the severity of her symptoms, let alone advocate for herself. We need more public guardians such as this in our community who can help take the pressure off of families who either don't have the financial ability to be guardian or do not want to rip apart the relationship with a grown child.

Please help us to save lives.