

Caty Way on Behalf of Legislative Bill 17-021

Good Afternoon, & thank you... My name is Caty Way, and it is absolutely an honor and a privilege to speak on behalf of this appropriation in the Criminal Justice, and Transitional programs within our State ... in my highest truth I know **without any ounce of a doubt I would not be standing before you today had it not been for the support services this bill addresses, during my own times of transition into what I can now call 'my community'.**

As a diagnosed mental, physical, emotional, and behavioral illness survivor with correctional involvement... **I can vouch that not ONE of the eight (8) proposed initiatives in this bill can go unattended to in my daily life today- if I am to continue on a path of usefulness, purpose, security, public peace, and good health with those of whom I have direct contact each day.** So I'd like to briefly share with you the impact this support has had on my own journey, and **the necessity** of these areas for others in our community, whom are not yet able to acquire them to the extent that they are so desperately needed.

While homeless in the dead of winter 2013, I had one broken cane, two broken hips and a background check that surprised even me. And had I not been provided a **housing voucher, all 65 lbs of me** may have froze during more than one blizzard ... had I not had **medication monitoring** to gradually wean me off over 17 prescribed medications from Doctors and Psychiatrists; **Services to assist in my Medicaid enrollment application** for continuing care; or had I had any less access to a **case manager**, whom helped me acquire resources for more secure, hospitable living conditions- **I would have lost hope, not only for myself but for my future...** And with that hopelessness- my usefulness to this community as a whole would have quickly fallen as well.

It was knowing that others were there supporting and assisting me- regardless of the labels and stigmas upon me, that rejuvenated my drive each day and helped me to understand the benefit of **mental health treatment services** in a nearby suburb. As therapy progressed, so did my ambitions to engage in more **positive outreach activities around my community.**

When 3 of my closest friends passed within the same 3 months of each other, I was offered the additional support of a **Peer Specialist** through Aurora Mental Health. That impact was so strong upon me that before long, I was seeking out **Supportive Employment Services** with the *Division of Vocational Rehab & PRC in Aurora*, where a career coach helped me to complete **my own** Peer Support Specialist training, and begin applying for on-going career opportunities in our area. She continues to meet with me weekly to provide encouragement, motivation, and support for the future I am slowly building; where I hope to one day provide Equine Therapy to Children and At-Risk Youth with Disabilities, Trauma, and Criminal Histories- much like myself.





Just recently, I've even received a few very enthusiastic job offers... yet I found that my background, in which I cannot yet afford to clear without these positions, has discontinued my eligibility with them.

Thus, difficulties may inevitably arise as I seek a better way of life for myself in the world around me; but today I know that I have a purpose, and those that support me in it- provided every one of those initiatives at hand, are not discounted or discontinued.

So I thank you for my life today, and the lives of countless others. Thank you for standing with me, for a community of supported purpose, health, peace and the security of all....

and I thank you for your time ☺

(Just Under 4 min When Bulleted)





The driving force behind my intentions has been nothing more than **to be one amongst many; and to give back to my community as active participant in the life around me again.**

But when your past feels super-glued to your back and bill-boarded for all to see... those intentions may as well drive you straight back into the ground you've tried so hard to dig yourself out of! Just this weekend, I heard the story of a disabled young-man whose struggles with re-entry in his community reflected just that.

Yet, because of the supportive services that I received through my transition from Homelessness, Mental/Behavioral and Emotional Health illnesses, and the criminal justice system...

Today:

- ✓ I am Certified Peer Support Specialist.
- ✓ I am a mentor to struggling young women with trauma, and the resulting mental-illnesses therein.
- ✓ I am active in 3 areas of outreach with my Church.
- ✓ I not only continue to attend, but am an active service member in my support groups, including speaking through-out the Metro-Denver Area, in advocacy of the program's impact upon my life.
- ✓ I have found healthy and positive alternatives to outside substances and have had no new medical costs for my on-going disabilities
- ✓ I have reacquired and maintain healthy, growing relationships with my family, whom support and encourage me today, more than I could've ever imagined
- ✓ I am actively on the waiting list for two low-income housing opportunities, which will allow me to live without dependence on Food Stamps, and local Food Banks once I am selected for move-in.
- ✓ I am renting my own, and very first Studio apartment, which I could never have acquired, without my father's willingness to Co-Sign... and
- ✓ For the first time in 17 years, I am responsibly managing my own financial affairs- and no longer need the assistance of a Payee Representative to monitor my bills, or my bank account
- ✓ I have acquired my first Driver's License in over 11 years, where I have been of service since to family, friends, and my support network- whom trust me today, to take them to doctor's appointments and errands, while practicing my driver-safety skills.

(Just to name a few)

To give a man a purpose, is to give him new life.

This bill allows that no one of us goes without that right; and is this not what our nation stands for?

Thank You for Standing Up for My Life Today, and for the Lives of Countless Others Like Me.

