

**Evan Silverman's testimony on SB 18-270
4/30/2018**

There were five of us in the advanced reading group in kindergarten. Three of those children ended up at Harvard and one at the University of Texas, followed by medical school at Stanford. I was not one of them.

In 1996, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

In the fall of 1997, I started at the well known Tattered Cover Bookstore, a place I love.

In 1999, my diagnosis was changed to Schizophrenia.

In 2008, I had an article called "My Journey, My Gifts" published in *Schizophrenia Digest* magazine. Partly because of my article I was asked to be on the board of Mental Health America of Colorado-now called Mental Health Colorado, got connected with Jewish Family Service, and was able to share my journey with various groups.

I didn't spend any time at the hospital from 1999 until late 2014. I would like to contrast my experiences in 2015 versus 2016 to shed light on how extremely helpful Senate Bill 18-270 could be for people leaving an emergency room, hospital, or detox center.

I'd like to start at the beginning of 2015. I was in the hospital for basically the first three months. After leaving Porter hospital here in Denver I had support from my family, my doctor and a therapeutic living community. The idea of transitioning to some sort of Intensive Outpatient Program was never broached. I tried to return to the bookstore in May. I missed a step or two by going directly from the hospital to working at the bookstore. Over the next four months or so I had significant struggles both at work and in other parts of my life. In the fall of 2015, I felt I needed to take some additional time away from the store.

In January 2016 I was back at Porter Hospital for 18 days. Prior to being discharged it was strongly recommended by my circle of support including doctors and my family that I participate in an intensive outpatient program (IOP) this time and we came up with four options. I decided to try the Wellness Treatment Center. They warmly welcomed me when I arrived.

Participating in the Wellness Treatment Center's program directly after leaving the hospital put me on a much much better trajectory as I moved forward. I gained many skills and techniques at the Center to help me succeed. In May of 2016 I was in the Transition Group at the Wellness Treatment Center and I started feeling like I was getting closer to returning to the Bookstore but I felt I needed another bridge, which took the form of volunteering. I approached Nancy Benyamin Director of Volunteer Services at Jewish Family Service.

I got connected to the the Jewish Family Service's Summer Lunchbox Express Program. I also started the Jewish Family Service Group Home Reading Club for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. The idea is to read on a regular basis with the residents and go to the library once a month to get books they request. I also volunteered with a group called the Jewish Disability Advocates.

As the summer of 2016 came to a close my circle of support and I knew it was almost time to give the Tattered Cover another shot. I traveled by myself to visit some friends in Minnesota-an activity in the past which would have been challenging. I had a good time and that upped my confidence.

In September we felt I was ready to try to return to the bookstore and organized a meeting with my sister and two of the general managers. We agreed to start at a few hours per week and by the end of the year I was up to 20 hours per week.

So what has been the impact today of that successful transition from the hospital to eventually working almost two years ago? I am currently at the bookstore 14 hours per week. I am working as hard as possible and I have not had to take any time away. I am still participating in the reading club and this summer intend to do the Lunchbox Express Program again. I also have continued to engage with the Wellness Treatment Center in their once a month After-Care Support Group. Overall I feel I am leading a full life right now.

I am very excited about this bill partly because of the 3.5 million dollars allocated to help people with transitions. Knowledgeable and compassionate Transition Specialists would be able to be a tremendous help to people who are at high risk meet their unique needs. These needs may include getting housing, program placement, advocacy or some other supportive services.

Smooth transitions will help more people on the road to recovery. I believe the contributions made to society by those who succeed in recovery will more than offset the money allocated in this bill. I also think everybody's lives in Colorado and beyond will be enriched by those successes.

It is within this context and my personal experiences that I fully support Senate bill 18-270!!