

Dr. Joy Koesten

Leawood, KS

Testimony in Support of H.B. 2281

Like many in Kansas, my husband Stewart and I know first-hand how difficult it is to access life-saving resources during a mental health crisis. Our oldest daughter, Leah, struggled with anxiety, depression, and addiction for well over a decade. It was only after her second suicide attempt that we finally understood that the core driver of her struggle was rooted in a childhood trauma she had kept secret for over twenty years. It took another three years to get her into a suitable treatment program, in another state, and then another two years for her to get back on stable ground.

This summer, Leah will celebrate 10 years in recovery. She is an amazing woman who lives and works in Nashville. Drawing on her personal experiences, Leah is passionate about recovery and relational health. She just completed her master's degree in clinical counseling, is a trained Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and a Certified Relationship Coach. She works at one of the largest nonprofit alcohol and drug-addiction recovery centers in Tennessee. When Leah is not working with clients, she sings in the Nashville Symphony Chorus! We are grateful for every single day.

Recovery is possible with research, education, and resources.

Leah is one of the lucky ones, she survived. But it shouldn't have been this difficult for her or for her family. We should have been able understand her struggle sooner. We should have been able to talk more freely with friends and family about what we were going through. And, we should have been able to find adequate treatment right here at home much sooner.

Our daughter lost 10 of the most productive years of her life because we couldn't find help sooner. So did we - believe me, family members lose productivity too when they are working from crisis to crisis and trying to keep their loved-one alive. Having a crisis line such as this would have helped us find local resources faster, saving us heartache, personal loss and financial loss.

No family should face a mental health crisis alone and this bill will make sure that Kansans have access to the resources they need to recover. Please vote Yes on H.B. 2281.