

Joelle Barozzini

Open Comment: HR 590 Hearing, October 14, 2016

My name is Joelle Barozzini. I am a volunteer for Carmen Capozzi and Sages Army. This isn't my paid position, I am not in recovery nor is any of my family. I am however blessed to have met and helped many that I know consider my friends. This is my volunteered position because there is a deficit. I am mother of three, work full time and pursuing my phd yet I feel obligated to continue to help until someone chooses to help grass root organizations move forward and continue doing what we do

Not only does Sages Army do warm hand offs. We do warm hand holding. We call treatment centers to make sure they go in on the day they were suppose to. We ask for releases so we can help staff recommend discharge facilities. We take calls from loved ones to support them while their family or friend is in treatment, preparing them for the road ahead. They call Sages Army upon discharge, sometimes weeks months afterwards when they relapse or are afraid too. We have parents that still call us after their child has passed, we take every call and if we can't at that exact time, we call everyone one back in within an hour or two. We help parents understand insurance and walk them through the levels of care and their options. This of course is free of charge and 24/7

We do this with no financial support from the state or county agencies. Although almost everyone has said "off the record, they wish they could help". It appears to me that agencies are competing with one another instead of working together. We have created an environment where not only is there a stigma for substance abuse but also a stigma to assist grass root organizations that are getting things done. We already go into the schools. We already take calls from all over the country. We already tour treatment facilities. We already attend community events. Despite all of this, there is extensive funding going into creating new entities to do what is already being done. These funds could be put to better use.

I will give you a for instance. I was very excited and supported when Our County opened a helpline on a 400,000 dollar grant Yet they are self proclaimed as being limited. An example of this is I sent a caller to this line. She was two days in self detox from benzos and heroin. She called me back within minutes telling her the helpline told her to google places and then hung up. This lady had a history of severe seizures and was near death. Whoever answered the phone asked her nothing of her situations. Within minutes of her calling me back, I discovered her medical background and told her to go to Mercy ER and was admitted on the spot. I reached out to the helpline the next day. This situation was confirmed Our phone line not only helped place her but still talk to her and her mom regularly. No charge and no funding received.

My battle however is when I take a treatment calls that have gov insurance or in need of county funding. My heart aches when I get a call with someone with gov insurance or none. I know they are on there own, they are facing at least a weeks wait. Through Sages Army, we make it happen to get these people in places in days. Sometimes same day. In fact this morning I had a grandmother of an 18 year old female with UPMC for you insurance. A rehab told her no beds until November. I made one call and she is entering Turning Point today

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There is not enough treatment facilities in our state that take gov insurance or county funding. In fact our county has zero inpatient yet it is a hotbed for the addiction epidemic. We need detoxes that are not only medical detoxes. In a weeks waiting time, people are dying. . We need facilities to take scholarships. We need to work with the private facilities that already exist and always have beds open to help. Throughout our state, there are hundreds of open beds for private insurance clients. Yet the uninsured or under insured have to wait it out, hoping their next use won't be their last. This is unacceptable. Partnerships with this private facilities should Me made

I also want to address an issue about revoking releases. There was a Monroeville police office here, but had to leave. He lost his daughter in March of this year. 28 days his wife and he participated in therapy and were identified as the discharge plan as being a safe environment. Evening of Day 28, she changed her home address and created a fictitious name. The facility successfully discharged her and transported her to her dealers house. She Overdosed and passed within 12 hours of this successful discharge. I am Requesting that perhaps we reexamine The release policy that requires a facilities to simply make a call stating a release has been revoked from our agency. No names. As a Hipaa trainer, I do not see this as violating Hipaa rights. This call might have saved her life. Her parents would have stepped into action, drove to the facility, put notices out to her friends, called police and gone to he dealers home. This story is not uncommon. I'm asking that we mandate this to facilities in honor of Heather Novac

Lastly, I want to mention a project that my workplace Pressley Ridge is working on per my suggestion. I work in treatment foster care. We have open homes. We often certify a home capacity for a higher number then they will ever serve on a permanent bases, we do this for emergency situations. I get many calls where people can't go to treatment because of their children. They often burn their bridges with family and their other supports are usually using. We submitted a grant to open our treatment foster homes to help these people. While in our care, these children will receive substance abuse education by a masters level therapist. Our treatment parents will transport these children to school provide daily care and help facilitate communication with their families while in treatment. Pressley Ridge is not seeking any financial support for their organization other than a small stipend for our parents to care for these children. Basically, this service line would generate nothing to our budget. But it will help the community and these parents that need this help. They see the impact sage's army has had and agreed to help. This would be the first of this care in the country. I hope other foster care agencies can follow suit

I'm not here to upset or belittle any one entity. I'm Frustrated. I'm here to ask for more help for those organizations that aren't bound by red tape and are making things happen. Im here to ask that grass root organizations be given an opportunity to be part of the solution and recognized as a true force to makes things happen

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