

First let me thank you for your time and attention today. My name is Jane Shank and I'm the mom of an incredible 16 year-old young man. He's currently taking honors and AP classes at his high school and is headed for the state finals with his FIRST Robotics team next month. I never would have predicted this for him ten years ago-that was when he received a mental health diagnosis and we began the long and difficult search for supports and services. Ironically enough, I was employed at the time as a mental health provider in a maximum security prison-for young men aged 14-20 who had been adjudicated as adults.

As I fought to find and fund services for my son, I had the constant specter in my mind of these 600+ young men- many of whom came to the corrections system because of their untreated mental health challenges. I could not let my son run the slightest risk of following in their unwilling steps. So we funded evaluations, social work and therapy services, and occupational therapy on our own-our insurance surely didn't cover it. But I was driven to do so, to provide my son with what he needed, because I knew what could happen. I saw it, heard the stories, and lived it each and every day at work.

My message to you today is this. No child should be denied services and supports that could make such a drastic difference for the rest of their lives. Funding for mental health services is no less vital than funding for physical health services. And funding for mental health services is no less vital than funding for autism related services. ALL of Michigan's children deserve to have coverage—not just children with Autism OR just children with mental health disorders. Please support Mental Health Parity as well as coverage for children with Autism by including a Mental Health Parity bill with SB 414, 415, and 981.

My life with my child and my work in the corrections system lead me to my position as Statewide Coordinator of the Parent Support Partner Project with the Association for Children's Mental Health. I have advocated for and supported many families in their journeys and would ask that you please include Mental Health Parity in these bills. Every child in this state deserves the opportunity to have coverage, every child deserves the opportunity to experience success and hope that my child is feeling. Please, provide that opportunity for our kids.

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