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Good morning/ afternoon

My name is Victoria Campe and I am resident of Las Vegas and have been since 1986.

I am here today to as a member of the Southern Nevada Taskforce for the Mentally Ill and to bring testimony on the issues concerning mental health in Nevada.

I would like to offer a moment of my background information and experience with mental illness.

In the year of 1995 during the summer months of July my youngest sister Connie was brought to stay with me by another sister who could no longer care for her due to her husband who is an officer with the US Air force and their family were being transferred to Hawaii. My sister Connie who had been incarcerated for over a year had been released approximately March/April 1995 from the Norwalk mental hospital.

After relocating to Las Vegas Connie had become a client/patient of SNAMH from the years of 1995-2001. Being diagnosed with schizophrenia before coming to Las Vegas she also underwent counseling and was diagnosed in the 7 year period with schizophrenia, drug induced schizophrenia and paranoid schizophrenia and for 7 years was given counseling and prescribed medications of cojentin, zyprexa, inderol, ativan and scheduled for monthly shots of haldol with the SNAMH.

What brought me here today as a member of the coalition is that life as I once knew it changed on the day of April 6<sup>th</sup> 2001. I was met at 9:00 in the morning at my door by the Clark County Coroner who asked me questions of my relationship with Connie and if I could identify a tattoo that was on the right hand of my sister she then advised me who she was and then advised me that at 6:44 a.m. that morning my sister had passed away at UMC hospital after receiving multiple injuries resulting from being struck by a car at 1:00a.m. while walking along E. Flamingo.

At this particular time in her life she had her own apartment. Unfortunately she had not been taking her shots and medications for approximately 3-4 months because in her opinion she did not need the medications as she felt she was fine and felt that everyone else had problems. Some of the symptoms she possessed when not taking her medications on a regular basis was to become extremely agitated, to walk and move constantly, act delusional, be fearful, become paranoid and to hallucinate such as hearing voices and seeing things that were not there, many times she would act out and become violent. She had been incarcerated in the jails numerous times.

From the year 2000-2001 my sister seemed to deteriorate and she had been scheduled and picked up on 1 DAP and 2 Form 2000. Within a ten month period of that year she had been taken twice to Sunrise hospital for a medical clearance and once to Desert Springs hosp prior to being sent to the crisis unit. All 3 times she spent approximately 6-12 hours or longer waiting to be transferred to SNAMH hosp. I

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know this to be true because she would call me continually from the hospital hour after hour, I would speak to the doctors and because I have copies of all the reports which include the information on medications she was given and her behavior.

During the 10 month period while she was being detained at SNAMH under a DAP in June 2000 she spent approximately up to a month at SNAMH while being treated and complying with her medication program she became once again functionable and released. The 1<sup>st</sup> Form 2000 in January of 2001 she was detained at the crisis unit for approximately 24-48 hours and released. The second Form 2000 in March 2001 she was detained at the crisis unit and hospital for approximately 4-5 days and released one day before the court order stated she was to have a hearing. Being evaluated by 3 different doctors and given 3 different diagnosis she was released with the written instructions stating no follow up needed and no medications. Approximately 2-3 weeks later she was gone from our lives, leaving 5 children and a family of broken hearts behind.

I am the one who applied for the DAP in May/June of 2000 to have my sister picked up. I am also the one who helped SNAMH in January of 2001 in securing a Form 2000 against her and I am also the responsible party for having my sister admitted under the second Form 2000 in March of 2001. The reason being is, She was a person whose capacity to exercise self control, judgment and discretion in the conduct of her affairs and social relations or to care for her personal needs being diminished as a result of mental illness to the extent that she presented a clear and present danger of harm to herself and to others and although a person of the so called dual diagnosis, a mental illness was diagnosed was present and contributed to her diminished capacity as a person. She was unable to satisfy her needs for nourishment, personal or medical care, supervision and continued assistance of others was needed, she needed shelter, self protection and safety and there indeed existed a reasonable probability of her death, serious bodily injury or physical debilitation which would and death did occur within the next preceding 30 days of being admitted and released from a mental health facility. Adequate treatment was not provided as the law suggests in NRS 433A.120-433A.330.

After her death I contacted one of the persons in charge that I was referred to on the Southern Nevada Taskforce for the Mentally Ill. I was invited to the first meeting I ever attended on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2001 and I have continued on as an active part of the coalition since.

Today I come in front of you on 2 very important issues;

1. On the building and establishing and funding for a much needed new and improved Mental Health hospital, and institution for the needy here in Las Vegas, that can operate with more, funding, staff, beds, equipment and programs. Patients need to be evaluated and diagnosed, prescribed proper medications and counseling that could

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lead to the rehabilitation of life. One program that is vital to the success of the mentally ill person is a much needed follow up medication program. The mental health of every human being is absolutely essential to them achieving prosperity.

Some of the existing problems we have occurring are that 50% who go to clinics are homeless, 30% have no insurance, 20% of the population are chronically mentally ill, we have and estimated 10,000-12,000 homeless in Las Vegas, 40-60% are mentally ill, 33% are dual diagnosed, 95% seen at SNAMH come from emergency rooms, 53% are turned back into the public and co-occurring disorders are 60-70% of the total number.

Often the reason people end up homeless and in jail is because the mental health system has failed them and despite budget increases their needs are still unmet. There are problems with patients who especially are alone in accessing help in the first place, Patients who are given different diagnosis from different doctors. Not enough beds. Not enough case managers. Dual diagnosed patients are not receiving the proper care. Unfunded and uninsured persons not being treated.

The need for a new mental health hospital is of great importance to the needs of the mentally ill persons in receiving adequate and qualified health care and assistance. However once the care is given the patient still needs to be protected and medication monitored for their safety, well being and prosperity. Which brings me to;

2.) Funding for a Mental Health Court. In October of 2001 I flew to Reno to observe the mental health court that had been established by Judge Breen, Senator Townsend and Assemblywoman Sheila Leslie who were working closely with local agencies and their liaisons. I sat through a 2 hour court session watching and listening carefully to the approximately 13 cases that afternoon.

I don't know if my sister would be alive today if she had the opportunity that these individuals do through the Washoe County mental health court, but I can tell you this, I do believe she would be alive if we had such a court in Las Vegas during her lifetime and she had the same opportunity of being part of that system.

The Court is the place for the administration of justice. A mental health court that will work closely with the mental health system and clients and can monitor and do follow up. It addresses problems of people who do not complete court ordered programs due to diagnosable mental illness, providing essential aftercare programs, there is much over crowding in our jails due to multiple arrests of co occurring disorders, misdemeanors and felonies, trespassing, disturbing the peace, petty theft, probation violation and prostitution, burglary, domestic violence, etc.. It provides comprehensive mental health services to eligible defendants, protects public safety, reduces re-incarceration, cuts down on the emergency room problems, and develops aftercare linkages. All cases involving the mentally ill persons are transferred to one judge with the first step to get the person evaluated and on medications, second is to provide housing, and third is weekly meetings with case managers, counseling is mandatory.

Medication saves lives, mentally ill people off their medications can become harmful to themselves, die or kill other people, their lives diminish into unhelpful, unsuccessful, incarcerated and homeless people and the worst part in mainstream society snubs their nose and looks the other way because its always someone else's problem.

We need funding for a new hospital and just as important if not more important we need funding for creating and establishing a mental health court in Las Vegas. It may be to late for any of this to help my sister but it isn't to late for me to continue to fight to help those who are like her, and continue I will.

I am asking this session of legislation to grant funding towards the mental health court and hospital. Please think and remember these people are not cattle or trash on our streets to continue to move them here and there to keep them out of out of the way. They are human beings created by God and they need help and we need to help them.

This session needs to initiate laws and programs that protect those individuals who cannot meet their own needs, who cannot satisfy their own needs, who cannot conduct their own affairs and social relations, who cannot meet the need of their own personal or medical care. These are the people who cannot make a sound judgement, the right choice or understand that their human rights for human life is unprotected. giving them the choice to refuse treatment or care is taking away their right to life and any prosperity they may achieve. The Mental Health Court is the right choice and venue to achieve the help they need.