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February 17, 2003

To the honorable members of this assembly, good morning to you all and thank you for allowing me to share my son's story.

My name is Elena Brady, from Reno, NV. I am a taxpayer and registered voter, if that matters. I am a mother of a wonderful son who has schizophrenia. I am here to ask you to consider very carefully Governor Guinn's proposed budget for mental health. Like Pres. Bush, I think he sees the importance of taking care of our citizens with mental illness.

I used to make fun and abuse the word "schizophrenia" with people. I was really ignorant about mental illness, until I saw my son, Mark, at the Nevada Mental Health Institute, inside a big room with a one way door and with a glass. Through the glass, I saw Mark wondering aimlessly, raising his arms as if to reach for God or something. This was in Sept. 1997. When I finally had a chance to visit him, he had a blank stare, did not want me to touch him, had no emotions, and his answers to my inquiries did not make sense at all. I thought I lost him, and never again able to relate to my bright, super athletic, thoughtful, and loving son. I was devastated as if my whole world fell on me. I thought of many horrible things that I have seen in the movies. I shed many tears and had many sleepless nights.

But thanks to the Mental Health programs that my son were able to benefit as he struggle with this illness. I believe the programs saved my son's life. He is now a consumer of PACT, Program for Assertive Community Treatment. Had it not been for this program, my son Mark would probably be hitchhiking all over the country, sleeping in the streets, and eat at the different Mission centers that he used to visit as a healthy young man and share the love of God with our church's youth program. I probably be wondering where he is, and asking these questions: Is he okay? Is he still alive, is he coming back, should I look for him?

The PACT program, have allowed me to have a peace of mind, take care of the rest of my family, and volunteer for a lot of community services. This program empowers my son to make his own decision, show him that he has a lot of potential, and that he can still be a productive member of the society. I am hopeful for my son's future and look forward to the day soon, where he can return the help he is now receiving.

Maybe the Mental Health programs could probably be helpful in eliminating crimes and homelessness on the streets too.

Please support Governor Guinn's proposed budget for Mental Health. I know, you have a big task ahead of you when it comes to spending and taxation. I will be praying for you to be creative and find resources that serve and help all Nevadans.

THANK YOU,

EXHIBIT S Senate Committee on Finance

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