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Note to Terry Russell, Executive Director of NAMI Ohio -- Ohio's SB43 Mental-Health Policy Change

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Tue, Feb 18, 2014 at 6:34 AM

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Dear Mr. Russell—Executive Director of NAMI Ohio:

I wanted to reach out to you today, to express my concern as attorney and advocate for the mentally-ill, as it relates to this article published online by "The Intelligencer" yesterday:

<http://www.theintelligencer.net/page/content.detail/id/595988/Treatment-Bill-Could-Save-Lives.html?nav=511>

I'm not sure who wrote this confused piece of literature, but NAMI Ohio—the organization that you lead—is quoted therein, and has once again been leveraged by the media to reinforce the sociological discrimination and stigmatic hatred currently being perpetrated against our mentally-ill population. Accordingly, I thought I would take this opportunity in following up with you again today, to continue our ongoing discussion here in Ohio, as to what being "mentally-ill" *actually* means.

Most notably, "The Intelligencer" makes use of NAMI Ohio's position on Senate Bill 43 (i.e. SB43), Ohio's currently-pending mental-health legislation, to:

1. Bolster its initial suggestion—that our society's interest in "safeguarding ourselves from the dangerously deranged" outweighs any interest in protecting the civil rights of human beings who struggle with mental-illness (regardless of presence of harm to self or others); and
2. Support its closing implication—that the passage of SB43 in Ohio will somehow cure our society's issue with mental-illness, by removing civil rights from mentally-ill persons, such that this society may then "save them from themselves".

I do wonder, whether you find yourself as disturbed as am now I, to see NAMI Ohio's political clout used in such a demeaning and deceitful manner against our mentally-ill population. I know I certainly wouldn't trust a society that considers me "dangerously deranged" just for having a mental-illness, to come and "save" me if and when I may need to be saved. In fact, "The Intelligencer" has framed our mentally-ill population so stigmatically in this article, that I would have to recommend you report it under your Mind-Movement Stigma-Buster Alert-System (9th page):

http://www.oacbha.org/docs/Stigma_-_NAMI.pdf

In the meantime though, I wanted to provide you with an update as to what is happening with Ohio's pending mental-health legislation, and most notably—let you know about some important public policy changes that are beginning to take place here in the state.

As you know, I myself am a mental-health consumer, having been labeled with the "serious mental illness" known best as Bipolar I Disorder (rapid cycling—with A.D.D., S.A.D., social-anxiety and of course, the ongoing substance-abuse issues which plagued a decade of my life between the ages of 16 and 26 due to misdiagnoses). As you *also* know—I am 32 now, and an attorney licensed to practice law here in our great state.

As such, I *intimately* understand the heartbreak incurred by our mentally-ill population upon reading such garbage as "The Intelligencer" article cited above—wherein supposed "leaders" in our society, self-proclaimed mental-health "advocates" use their strength and power to continue to *oppress* the mentally-ill. *Whether it comes cloaked as "guidance", "teaching" or "advice"* Mr. Russell—make no mistake, it is emotional abuse whichever way you slice:

<http://www.counselingcenter.illinois.edu/self-help-brochures/relationship-problems/emotional-abuse/>

Thankfully, our leaders here in the Ohio Senate have been much more receptive to the needs of mental-health consumers, and garner a much greater sense of compassion and *respect* for those of us who struggle to overcome mental-illness. I can tell you this from my own personal mental-health legislative-advocacy experience—as I have been working very closely with Senator Bill Coley, Chairman of the Ohio Senate Civil Justice Committee (wherein SB43 currently rests), and SB43 Co-Sponsor, Senator Dave Burke—to amend Ohio's legislation in such a manner that we can:

1. Remove the initial threat SB43 posed to our mentally-ill population;
2. Add in supplemental legal protections for mentally-ill persons compelled involuntarily under SB43, into our legal system; and
3. Remove stigmatic provisions that exist currently in Ohio's Revised Code.

I wish, in terms of managing NAMI Ohio, that you will be able to *learn* something from this exemplary leadership model that has now been set in our state; for even our “seriously” mentally ill population, ***we now have hope***. We are making Ohio a better place to live in for those who are different, and I wish you the best of luck in now picking up *your* pace, so as to catch *up*.

In the meantime, I will be creating a new, educational video series to help support kids who are being bullied and otherwise struggling to deal with mental-illness, for posting at:

<http://janesaysrise.com/on-the-upside-why-being-mentally-ill-is-actually-a-good-thing/>

As always, if you have any feedback you would care to share, I would love to hear it.

Very Truly Yours,

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