

# Behavioral Health Community Crisis Centers

There's been healthy debate with respect to my having voted against the Behavioral Health bill passed in the last Session. The Governor's decision to place the facility in Idaho Falls instead of Coeur d'Alene, because of 'lack of support' from the legislators here in North Idaho, was designed to blame those voting against it and for no other reason.

As a duly elected State Representative, I'd like to be clear about my job. I represent my constituents. I'm called a State Representative but I don't represent the State. I represent the people in my district and most of those people are taxpayers.

This bill purports to provide for "those Idaho citizens experiencing behavioral health crisis where an appropriate level of care to meet their needs is not available." This is not the only vague term giving too much latitude in determining who gets help and when. The lack of a definition provided in the bill is deeply troubling. For example, what is the "appropriate" level of care and who decides?

Another issue is the mandate that local resources are to be drained which could be properly earmarked for caretakers already in place. We currently have private psychologists, private physicians, hospital emergency units, immediate care facilities and law enforcement. These are not ancillary providers; these are the professionals who are in place to deal with just these issues.

Who could do it better, given their training for handling these issues in the real world?

Yet S1352 launches the State of Idaho directly into the medical health care business and allows the State to assume the responsibility for the care of Idaho citizens in their new found Mental Health Crisis care centers. This at a time when so many people are already experiencing the devastating consequences of government mishandling of health concerns. It's now common knowledge that we have Veterans betrayed and left to die because the government is handling their care. Now the State wants to be in charge, what could possibly go wrong? Sadly, we know all too well.

When I see language about how "use of the centers is entirely voluntary" I shake my head in wonderment at the senseless notion that someone in the midst of a mental health crisis with a substance use disorder will realize that they need help and willingly seek it out. How does law enforcement take someone voluntarily to the center? And by the way, there is no in-patient care in these new facilities. At this point the law provides only for out-patient care. Has the media addressed this issue at all? No..

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The vagueness and impracticality of this bill are precisely why thoughtful lawmakers stood against it. Is behavioral crisis well defined? How about the word appropriate? Who decides and when are these various definitions applied? An un-elected board decides and this board is appointed, but by whom? People who are qualified? We must require solid information when we make serious decisions. None of this direction is in the bill to inform the decision makers.

This law ignores all local control, local plans, local efforts already accomplished. Do we honestly believe that a State agency knows best? Financially we were given no minimum or maximum of what these will cost to operate, only that cities and counties were to contribute the maximum possible.

Have cities and counties been notified to budget for these new expenses? Current fiscal realities would dictate that the Representatives of the people make certain that laws that they pass are calculated not to adversely harm the budgets of local governments. Now for indigents they will pay the crisis center as well as the folks they refer them to. The bill solved no problem it simply made this on going problem cost more money.

Finally, the bill states, these centers can be contracted and run by other organizations but the fees they charge and collect remain with the center. What organizations??

Two recommendations I always give when discussing the effects of legislation. You need not take my word for it; Follow the money and Read the contents of the law.

Sincerely;

Idaho State Representatives  
Kathy Sims District #4