

Hello, my name is Savanna Noe, and I am a resident of Woonsocket, a mother, a survivor of domestic violence, and a suicide attempt survivor. I'm here this evening to support bill H-7900. As a child, I lived through various forms of abuse, which took a toll on my mental health as I got older. When I discovered I would have a child in 2016, my mind was flooded with questions and uncertainties.

My daughter was born in 2017 and was such a happy baby; she didn't cry often, slept through the night beginning around six weeks old, and was healthy overall. Shortly before her second birthday, I began seeing someone, and our relationship developed quickly. Within a few months, I was pregnant, and we all lived together. My daughter started showing signs of anxiety, and when I would say this to someone, they often told me she was "too young" to be anxious. She would scream and cry for hours, she pulled hair out of her head and would bang her head against the walls and doors when upset. I was desperate for someone to help; everywhere I turned, I was told she was too young for services. My parents would say I was overreacting and did similar things as a toddler; that only made me more concerned.

I continued to push, and around the time she was 2.5 years old, I was connected with Enhanced Outpatient Services at the North American Family Institute in Warwick. They were able to provide support to the family and helped me learn how to help her cope. The program isn't designed to provide long-term services, and after about eight weeks, they stopped my daughter's services. Things were going well; she was adjusting well to being a big sister; she loved holding her sister's hand during every bottle. As time passed, the relationship I was in became more toxic, and eventually, my children and I were fleeing for our safety; we spent seven months in a domestic violence shelter through the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition was rough for all of us, with a sick infant, a toddler experiencing a considerable change, and my fears as a newly single mom.

We spent this time in survival mode, and when we got into housing ten months later, I did everything I could to provide structure and create a stable home, but it felt like I was failing at everything. My older daughter had been struggling with her anxious behaviors since we got into the shelter, and I was getting burned out from it all. I once again tried to seek therapeutic support but came to many dead ends because she was seen as too young. I spent countless hours crying and feeling like I failed my child because I didn't know how to help her cope with such big feelings for such a small child. At only three years old, she received Enhanced Outpatient Services again through NAFI, but this time for a shorter period. I was told her behaviors weren't severe enough for her to need that level of care. Thankfully, at this time, she was also enrolled in Head Start, and I was able to receive support from them, but I could not find her an outpatient clinician. Despite my efforts, it wasn't until my child turned five that I was able to find an agency willing to provide regular counseling for her.

My daughter is now seven years old and, thankfully, thriving both socially and in school. It wasn't easy to find providers willing to help a family with a child of such a young age, but I refused to let the system overlook her because she was "too young." Mental health doesn't judge us based on our race, social status, or age; therefore, we must ensure that we have

providers available for all who need services. I urge you to support this bill and prepare our future generations for success.