

Elisa Tobia, NAMI Finger Lakes - Corning

I'm here today to share my personal root cause analysis. For the past year I have been conducting my own assessment of the mental health care system as it relates to my son MATTHEW Tobia who died by suicide in 2021. I have had a tremendous amount of assistance from professionals both in and outside of OMH. Matthew was a stellar high school lacrosse athlete on scholarship to Division 1 University of Delaware where he suffered a career ending injury during the time when opioids were handed out by doctors, under advisement by pharmaceutical industry like candy. Matthew is a testimonial to a person having the capacity to beat opioids. Subsequently however his brain was altered, and he suffered severe mental illness. The report here today to tell you that the laundry list of exceptional programs and interventions offered through OMH DID NOT TRICKLE DOWN TO MY SONS BENEFIT in STEUBEN COUNTY (OMH western district). Yes, the candy dish of hopes and opportunities projected by OMH didn't get to my son. Matthew was provided a social worker 1x per month, 10 min psychiatric medication management by phone call or zoom through the county clinic. Additionally, program HHUNY was a recommendation I made and he was subsequently provided however that program employee did not do their job and the records in your possession show this. But to the bigger picture: why wasn't he given the plethora of other programs? Madam Attorney General I most appreciate you and the Office of Attorney General staff's pursuit of consumer rights and necessary reforms. While my son is deceased, we so often in life used the services of your office to file appropriate complaints or tell people we felt were violating our rights that we would in fact reach out to you. My profession is a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher who spent many years teaching consumer advocacy skills to my students. I am honored to stand before you today to contribute to this first deep study by a NYS Attorneys General to contribute to the data gathering to aid in your work. I am confident that the processes employed by your staff, will identify the common threads of barriers and benefits within the system to aid all of us affected by mental illnesses. We are losing people to a dysfunctional system. These people include not only patients, but families and the many very dedicated professionals (healthcare as well as policing) committed to these helping professions. I consider policing a helping profession and the Corning police department, in Matthews greatest time of need, was protected by them. I lay heavy responsibility on the insurance industry and pharmaceuticals. How can they continue

down their roads knowing their actions are destroying a healthcare system? They, just like during the pharmaceuticals with opioids, are at it again. While injectable pharmaceuticals are valuable treatment tools, they also allow premature discharge because the patient is showing signs of improvement. (Once improvement shows they must discharge per health insurance companies.) Hospitals are putting profit before people.....or maybe survival before people also causing great harm. Yes, madam Attorney General: PROFIT BEFORE PEOPLE! My son was in tremendous pain from schizoaffective disorder stating in his last weeks "Doesn't anyone want to help me." Attorney General James, for the record I agree with his statement. The more I have learned about the glorious ideas and quite possible major life improving programs from OMH I must ask: Why were they not part of his legislative action to protect those most in need of protection. My legislative ask: Please include required case reviews of persons who die by suicide as a means to establish a degree of accountability and measures for growth. I'm referring to the systemic look at patient access and deliverables of the "best practices" in the field to validate the work, enhance and improve the work. As my own psychiatrist reminded me: even in the best of all medical fields people die, such too in psychiatry. Let's raise the bar though and make NYS Mental Healthcare system the best in America treatment plan? I am grateful to you for taking this arduous task on and I hope to see a great deal of legislative action to protect those most in need of protection. My legislative ask: Please include required case reviews of persons who die by suicide as a means to establish a degree of accountability and measures for growth. I'm referring to the systemic look at patient access and deliverables of the "best practices" in the field to validate the work, enhance and improve the work. As my own psychiatrist reminded me: even in the best of all medical fields people die, such too in psychiatry. Let's raise the bar though and make NYS Mental Healthcare system the best in America.