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News from the House Majority

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House HESS Committee Hears Testimony from Petersburg Teens

(JUNEAU) – Three adolescent clients from Petersburg Mental Health Services (PMHS) testified before the House Health, Education and Social Services Committee earlier today.

Each of the clients in treatment for serious mental illness or addiction presented their digital stories – a therapy being explored by PMHS as a way for patients in recovery to express their creativity through video.

PMHS Executive Director Susan Ohmer, accompanied Michael Boseman, Michael Biggers and Jessica Greene to the capitol for the presentation and to testify before the Committee on the importance of this program and the funding PMHS receives from the state.

“Generation after generation of hard-working people pass on a genetic and cultural legacy of depression, addiction, and self-sacrifice along with their intense pride of community and fierce work ethic,” said Ms. Ohmer of the importance of PMHS’s location.

Mr. Boseman spoke to the Committee about his experiences in the program, while personal videos were introduced by Mr. Biggers, Ms. Greene and a video was shown by Katie Edfelt, who was unable to attend.

“I was excited to come, not just because it was the Capitol building, but because I could do something for the people who have done so much for me,” said Mr. Boseman.

Mr. Biggers, “When first approached with the idea I jumped at the chance because I wanted to help out PMHS and I would like to showcase a workable therapy that others can relate to.”

Ms. Greene concluded, “I came today because I’ve asked so much of PMHS and I wanted to try and give back the help that they’ve given to me, and to try to get my story out there so that people who are like me and think they are alone know that they aren’t. Hopefully other young women can relate to me and know they don’t want to go through all the complications that I went through in addition to just being a teenager.”

Ms. Edfelt couldn’t attend the hearing in Juneau, but of her presentation said, “It is part of my relationship with my mom. It was very simple but effective and I hope you all enjoy it.”

Representative Paul Seaton (R-Homer) who serves on the HESS Committee and heard the testimony today said, “As always, it is important for those of us in the Legislature to see the benefits of the programs we fund. Accountability is essential in state government and presentations such as this allow us to better understand what state funds are being used for.”

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