

SUPPORT HB 3127

Regarding the Psychiatric Drugging of Children in Juvenile Justice

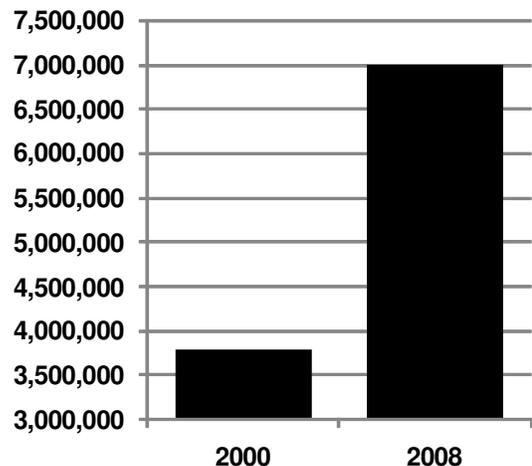
I deeply appreciate the effort this session by Representative Sylvester Turner on behalf of Texas children. His three pieces of proposed legislation—House Bill 3127, along with HB2163 addressing Medicaid children, and HB3662 on behalf of foster children—directly confront the shameful reality that our state is systematically and unnecessarily drugging hundreds of thousands of our precious children.

HB3127 addresses a very important part of this disgraceful state of affairs. In the last decade, there has been a growing trend away from the effort to implement good methods based on the quaint notion that people—even young people—are responsible for their behavior. I suppose that is why helping our off-track youth to reform and rehabilitate their behavior is called “corrections!”

It seems we are replacing these more or less traditional methods with a radical new approach based on the modern, pseudoscientific theory of biological psychiatry. This theory presumes that behavior is not really a question of character and responsibility; rather, behavior—in this case delinquent behavior—apparently results from some sort of unspecified biological or genetic defect, called a “mental illness” such as ADHD or Bipolar Disorder. I think this appeals to adults because it takes us off the hook regarding our responsibility to meet the needs of our children, and the nagging sense that the reason we have so many wayward youth is because we are failing our responsibility to them. The pathetic result is

“Nearly 7 million Americans are abusing prescription drugs—more than the number who are abusing cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, Ecstasy, and inhalants, combined. That 7 million was just 3.8 million in 2000, an 80 percent increase in just 6 years.”

Source: U.S. Department of Justice



that we blame our children by declaring them defective, and place more and more of them on psychiatric drugs. Many of our correctional facilities are looking more like psychiatric hospitals than juvenile detention or rehabilitation centers; as many as 70% of the young people are on psychotropic drugs.

One tragic irony of this situation is that it utterly undermines the need to encourage responsibility. Another is the well-known fact that a very high percentage of youth offenders have problems with illicit drug use and abuse. What kind of message do we send to our young people as we

urge them to say no on the one hand, while we hand them drugs on the other? Did you know that the effect profiles of many of the psychotropic drugs are basically the same as similar illegal drugs? For example, the Drug Enforcement Administration monitors production and distribution of the commonly prescribed stimulant drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall because of their high addictive potential and risk of abuse?

The DEA also reminds us that the effects profile of methylphenidate (Ritalin) is virtually identical to cocaine and methamphetamine! Similarly the effect profiles of most antidepressants is very similar to the amphetamines. I hope my message is clear.

I like HB 2163 because it challenges this trend whereby our state abdicates responsibility and turns to drugging our children instead. I think it reminds us of our need to face the great challenge of really helping our youth. I think the best way to do this is demonstrated by the very successful Stars and Stripe program at Harris County Youth Village, developed by psychologist Ed Young around 1993, and still up and running¹. The program involves maturity coaching, with key components such as pro-social roles and responsibilities, self-directed goal setting, local support teams, student government, and trained resident mediators. Program evaluation data showed a much lower use of psychotropic drugs than other juvenile detention programs.

(1) http://www.thenaturalsystemsinsitute.org/Juvenile_Institution_Program_Stars_and_Stripes/1%20Development%20of%20_stars_and_stripes.htm

USA Today reported on May 3, 2007 that adults with “serious mental illness” die on average 25 years earlier than the average American.

An Important Observation:

There is a great deal more to be said about this business of drugging our state’s children, especially in today’s climate of terribly ethically corrupted mental health policy and practice, but I will end with just one more pointed observation:

The most poisonous of all the psychotropic drugs used on Texas children are the so-called antipsychotics, which tend to cause permanent neurological and metabolic damage to those who use them. *USA Today* reported on May 3, 2007 that adults with “serious mental illness” die on average 25 years earlier than the average American. The evidence points to atypical antipsychotics and obesity as prime causative factors.

You are not helping Texas children when you allow them to be given these drugs. Please pass this bill out of committee, and support all three of Representative Turner’s bills.

Please support HB3127 and help protect Texas kids from antipsychotic drugs.

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