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Sent Via email: klhartman@nycourts.gov on 06/19/2024

Dear Mental Hygiene Legal Services Attorney Kate L. Hartman,

My name is Katie Riford, and I am reaching out to you regarding my sister, Christina C. Little, who is currently being held involuntarily at Erie County Medical Center in the Behavioral Health Unit [5 Zone 3]. Despite multiple attempts to contact you, including a detailed voice message left on Tuesday, June 18, 2024, I have not received any response. My sister has granted permission for me to discuss her case with you, and it is imperative that we address the serious issues surrounding her involuntary admission and treatment.

Background Information:

- **Patient:** Christina C. Little
- **Involuntarily Brought to ECMC Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program (CPEP):** June 6, 2024
- **Hospital:** Erie County Medical Center “ECMC”
- **Contact Attempts:** Multiple, including voice message on June 18, 2024

Key Concerns:

1. Lack of Communication and Transparency:

- Hospital staff, including medical providers, the unit manager Jennifer Carroll, the VP of behavioral health services Jillian Brown, and others, have consistently failed to return my calls or follow through on promised callbacks.

- The social worker, Carmen, has avoided discussing the legalities of my sister's involuntary admission, particularly whether the required two physicians signed off on it as mandated by New York Mental Hygiene Law, as well as their names.
- Upon Christina's request of her own medical information/records, medical staff at ECMC has knowingly and willfully not provided and /or denied Christina with the names of the alleged physicians who allegedly signed off on the involuntary admission and/or provided any other pertinent information regarding the details of how she is being forced to remain as an involuntary patient at ECMC's Behavioral Health Unit [5 zone 3] against her will.

2. **Family Exclusion:**



- Neither Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger nor Nurse Practitioner Katie Burke have reached out to me, our mother, or our brother, despite our close relationship with Christina. We live nearby, speak with Christina frequently, and see her regularly.

3. **Questionable Involuntary Admission:**

- Christina is a high-functioning, intelligent individual with no prior mental health history. She is a full-time, dedicated, loving mother, who home-schools her elementary-aged daughter and provides all of her daughter's care, including taking her to Taekwondo classes multiple days a week. Christina is the full-time caretaker for her family and is responsible for nearly all household needs and tasks, including taking care of two dogs. Christina is also a loving, loyal daughter, sister, aunt, and friend, an advocate for her family, and has a strong connection to God.
- Christina's admission to ECMC's CPEP and Behavioral Health Unit followed a request for separation from her husband, who subsequently provided false information to have her committed to ECMC's Behavioral Health Unit. Her husband, Andrew Little also self-diagnosed Christina with schizophrenia prior to her admission, despite not having any mental health licenses, degrees, or

experience to do so. Christina does not exhibit any signs of schizophrenia or any other mental illness, nor does she present as a danger to herself and/or to others.


- Christina has been called “dangerous” by Katie Burke, Nurse Practitioner, however, the definition of “dangerous” has been misconstrued to fit a false narrative to keep Christina admitted to ECMC Behavioral Health Unit against her will.
- Christina has been falsely accused of having “delusions” and talking about “government agencies” by Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger who has spent very little time with Christina. This is patently false. Christina has not talked about government agencies, including with Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger. I have personally read pages upon pages of online reviews of Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger, who clearly has an established pattern of lying, forcing medications upon patients, and other serious misconduct/malpractice. What is happening to Christina is not an isolated experience at ECMC Behavioral Health Unit with Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger and staff. I am also aware of an active medical malpractice lawsuit against Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger, which has been initiated by a previous patient. This is all gravely concerning. Here is an example of one of the reviews of Dr. Michael T. Guppenberger, which is inline with Christina’s own experience:

 ↪ Reply  Flag

Arrogant abuser

Deserves negative stars. Doesn't care about or listen to his patients. Holds people against their will and forces drugs upon them with blatant lies and malicious intent.

[More Details](#)

 Helpful Feb 15, 2024

- Per Christina’s request to protect her rights and safety, our family has recorded all telephone interactions with Christina while she is being held against her will at

ECMC's Behavioral Health Unit, as further proof that Christina is sane, coherent, level-headed, with a calm demeanor, and does not suffer from mental illness.

4. Inappropriate Treatment and Threats:

- During the involuntary admission at ECMC, Christina has been prescribed medication for a mental illness she does not have, which she has rightfully refused to take.
- Carmen, the social worker assigned to Christina's case, has threatened that the hospital can obtain a court order to forcibly medicate her, during a recent telephone call with me.
- There is undue pressure on Christina to add her husband to her Release of Information ["ROI"], despite her status as a domestic violence victim. This is considered abuse [medical bullying], more specifically coercive control by a medical professional, Katie Burke, Nurse Practitioner.
- Katie Burke, Nurse Practitioner slyly dangled the discharge paperwork like a carrot in front of Christina, attempting to make Christina think she would be discharged if she agreed to add her domestic abusive husband to the Release of Information. Still, Christina remained firm in her decision to keep her domestic abusive husband off of her ROI, which is fully within her rights to do.

5. Victim of Domestic Violence:

- Christina's husband self-diagnosed her with schizophrenia and had her committed. This is not only false but also a serious misuse of psychiatric services.
- I have recently filed a report with the Justice Center for People with Special Needs since my sister has been placed in a vulnerable position, being held against her will at ECMC Behavioral Health Unit, and is a victim of domestic violence. I have also reported many of the details regarding Christina's "care" at ECMC, which I am now sharing with you in this letter. I received confirmation that the

report was deemed credible and flagged for further investigation due to serious concerns.

Urgent Request:

I urgently request your intervention to ensure that Christina's rights are protected and that her case is reviewed promptly. Given the imminent threat to her safety and well-being, I ask for the following immediate actions:

1. **Review the Legality of the Involuntary Admission:**
 - Confirm whether the required two physicians signed off on the admission.
 - Assess the validity of the information provided by her husband.
2. **Facilitate Communication and Transparency:**
 - Ensure that I receive all relevant medical records and information pertaining to Christina's treatment and care.
3. **Protect Christina from Forced Medication:**
 - Prevent any forced medication without her consent, considering the potential serious harm due to misdiagnosis.
4. **Support Christina as a Domestic Violence Victim:**
 - Advocate for her rights and safety, ensuring she is not coerced into including her abusive husband in her medical decisions.

Your prompt attention to this matter is crucial. Please contact me as soon as possible to discuss the next steps and how we can work together to secure Christina's prompt release and protect her rights.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Katie L. Riford