

STATEMENT OF HON. HULETT C. SMITH, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, PRESENTED BY LOUIS S. SOUTHWORTH, ASSISTANT SUPERVISOR, DIVISION OF ALCOHOLISM, WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. SOUTHWORTH. Thank you, Congressman Staggers, Mr. Chairman and Dr. Carter.

I would like to make a few remarks prior to presenting the Governor's statement.

It is a pleasure, a privilege and an honor to come before you today in support of title III, part A of H.R. 15758, and I appreciate this opportunity to speak in favor of sound alcoholism legislation such as you are considering today.

We support the testimony given by Mr. George Dimas, president of the North American Association of Alcoholism Programs. The interest in West Virginia in this kind of program is longstanding. Governor Hulett Smith of West Virginia and our Secretary of State, the Honorable Robert D. Bailey, Jr., previously submitted statements for the record before the full Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, at the hearing in September 1965. Their statements reflect the sentiments of the entire State government of West Virginia in support of this sound legislation.

Governor Smith asked me to tell you that he deeply regretted that he could not appear here today in support of this bill. He did, however request that I read to you the following statement voicing his complete approval of this important measure.

"As throughout the Nation, alcoholism is a serious public health problem in West Virginia. During the past 4 years, our State has taken positive action. With State moneys and a small Federal grant, we have established the base for a comprehensive alcoholism program. We now have eight alcoholism information centers and three treatment facilities. Even though West Virginia has had national recognition for what it has done, the facilities we now have cannot begin to meet the need for services demanded. Each of the treatment facilities has a long waiting list and our local alcoholism information centers have a caseload far beyond their capacity to provide adequate services * * * and the caseload continues to mount.

"We are one of the States under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The decision by this court that 'we can no longer treat the alcoholic as a criminal * * * but as a medical problem,' has resulted in a very noticeable impact on the need and demand for alcoholism services. The current case now before the Supreme Court, *Powell v. Texas*, will no doubt have a still greater impact and create a still greater demand on our limited resources. This problem of alcoholism that we now face in West Virginia and the Nation is so great that State and local resources cannot cope with the problem. Federal action is essential. Money for staff and facilities is a must, and time is of the essence.

"This bill on alcoholism that we are considering here today was introduced by our own Congress, Harley O. Staggers. The State of West Virginia is proud that our Congressman had the courage and foresight to take the leadership for legislation on this most serious public health problem.