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# AL mom struggles with daughter's mental care amid budget cuts

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By Bryan Henry, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

ELMORE CO., AL (WSFA) - In the face of massive budget cuts for mental health in recent years, Deborah Hays finds herself fighting a mighty battle to save her daughter from herself.

"She was going to end up killing me," Hays said.

On the back roads of Elmore County near Tallassee, Hays still bears the wounds from an assault by her very own daughter last weekend. It was a horrifying encounter.

"I love my daughter and she needs help," the mom explained. "She went to pick up a rock and bust my window again."

It is the story of 38-year-old Laura Leigh Maschi, struggling with bi-polar and more since she was 18 months old.

"She has magnetic explosive disorder," Hays said.

Maschi sits in the Elmore County Jail, charged with assault. Therein lies the proverbial fork in the road.

Hays believes her daughter needs to be committed because she can no longer care for her.

Hays said she was told by local county health officials the state had no beds available for Maschi. While it is true there have been massive state and federal budget cuts in mental health, the Alabama Department of Mental Health says room can be found, but it could take about 48 hours to do so.

"I don't know how to get it," Hays said. "It seems like I get blocked doors."

In Alabama, probate judges have the power to commit a patient to long-term care based on clear evidence and evaluations.

Deborah Hays says her situation is a matter of life and death.

In fact, neighbor Karen Maddox is convinced had she not been around last weekend, Hays could have been killed.

"When she goes into these rages, she's like an animal," Maddox said.

Court records show Maschi has a probate hearing scheduled in March, a pivotal moment that could determine whether Hays' daughter gets the long-term psychiatric care the family says she needs or risk another confrontation at home.

Hays said her daughter is, in fact, a loving person with a kind heart beneath her mental illness. The daughter has a court date on Thursday to deal with the assault charges against her mom.

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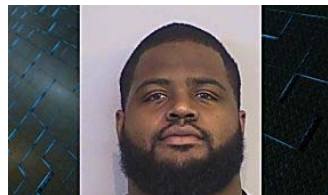
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