

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (BOSTON)

Eckersley family issues statement in response to tragic event involving their daughter and her baby on Christmas night

We are utterly devastated by the events that unfolded on Christmas night when our daughter Allie delivered a baby while living in a tent. It is heartbreaking that a child was born under such unthinkable conditions and in such tragic circumstances. We learned with everyone else from news reports what happened and are still in complete shock. We had no prior knowledge of Allie's pregnancy.

We are extremely grateful to the first responders in Manchester, NH for saving this innocent newborn boy and to the hospital staff for everything they are doing to ensure his well-being.

Allie is our beloved daughter who we adopted at birth. Though it is painful to share, we feel it necessary to offer greater context of Allie's circumstances and background. Allie has suffered from severe mental illness her entire life. Allie was hospitalized numerous times for her illness and lived in several residential programs. We did our very best to get Allie all of the help and support humanly possible.

Once Allie became an adult there was even less we could do because she was legally free to make her own decisions as long as she was not a danger to herself or others. Under existing laws, there was simply no way to force her to receive treatment. Nonetheless, we continued to support her as best we could.

Since she was twenty, Allie chose to live on the streets in New Hampshire. As in many states, the mental health system in New Hampshire is broken. The state hospital used to have 2500 psychiatric beds. Now there are less than 200 for more than 1.2 million citizens and the state was forced to eliminate another 48 beds this fall because of staff shortages. Without adequate inpatient beds for crisis, treatment and stabilization, a state mental system fails.

We have always offered Allie a path home but she has made other choices. We hope Allie now accepts the treatment she desperately needs for her mental health issues. We also hope that all those who have heard this tragic story withhold judgment about our daughter until all the facts come out.

We are in the process of filing a guardianship petition so that we may receive information and have decision making with respect to Allie's son.

We thank you for your support and prayers for this beautiful, innocent baby boy. We hope people understand what an agonizing situation this is and we respectfully ask for privacy. Accordingly, we will have no further comment on this matter for the time being.

The Eckersley Family

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