

Valerie Ferrell, Cecil County

**I'm writing in opposition to SB182/HB282, "Adult Protective Services – Modifications."**

I voluntarily cared for my sister in my home for five and a half years. She has a brain injury and psychosis. Our parents are deceased and there are no other siblings, and she can't manage on her own. Over the years her behavior turned violent and escalated while I struggled to find her psychological help that is dangerously lacking in Maryland. She was on a wait list for residential psych for over a year. Her anger eventually exploded at me in June and she came at me with a kitchen knife. After nine months in the detention center, she was finally taken in at a residential psych program, but I'm told it's voluntary, and she could leave at any time. She would be homeless.

Under the proposed language, could I be investigated for "neglect" if she walked out and had no home? The proposed definition of a "trusted relationship" includes relatives and people who have "assumed" care. If I assumed care in the past, this language appears to hold me responsible indefinitely. I didn't have a legal obligation to care for her, but it seems like under this new language I would. Typically a person has to petition the court for a guardianship to be legally responsible for the wellbeing of another, but this proposed language seems to make a legal relationship where none should exist.

My sister makes false reports against me and my husband. Will we have to undergo more if this bill is amended even though she's no longer in my home or under my care? There are many mandated reporters, and no penalty for false, careless or retaliatory accusations. I was investigated by APS after she was arrested, and under the proposed changes it seems I could be investigated again simply because in the past I volunteered to care for her.

Our system is already biased toward maximized reporting, and the proposed changes would create even more reports, which will burden county resources and expand the possibility of needless and stressful investigations.

The proposed language would create an unfunded mandate on counties to handle more reports and presumably train investigators on parsing out "psychological harm." What happens when a vulnerable adult is suffering from chronic mental illness? How will an investigator know how to discern one psychological symptom from another, or the onset of something perceived as separate?

I urge the committee to reject these amendments.