

Testimony for HB740 Correctional Services – Restrictive Housing – Direct Release

House Judiciary Committee, Chairman Luke Clippinger

Date: Feb. 25, 2019, 1:00 pm

From: Trevor A., Montgomery County

POSITION: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

I am the father of a 36-year-old son who suffers from Paranoid Schizophrenia. My son, who I will call “John,” was first diagnosed when a senior in college. He responded well to medication completed two undergraduate degrees and obtained an excellent job. Then he stopped his medication and went downhill fast. John was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace and second-degree assault.

He was held in restrictive housing on suicide watch while in the Frederick County Adult Detention Center. He refused medication because of his paranoid delusions and lack of insight due to untreated psychosis and was deadly scared of all jail personnel. After 30 days he was court ordered to the state hospital. It is impossible to explain the agony and helplessness we felt as parents watching our son suffer in restrictive housing. **We fervently wish he had been evaluated sooner for transfer to an inpatient hospital bed.**

Without an amendment to HB740 to require an examination to determine if the inmate meets the criteria for involuntary hospital admission, this bill will not help someone like my son. I shudder to think what would have happened if he had been released to the community without first getting hospital treatment where expert staff were able to get him to agree to voluntary medication, although medication over objection could have been given in necessary. If released with untreated psychosis, where he is out of touch with reality, it would be highly likely that he would commit another crime, and possibly harm someone and be arrested again. There would also be a high risk of suicide.

John’s hospital treatment brought my son back to me. It was like a miracle. He avoided any more restrictive housing. Expert staff worked with him to voluntarily accepted medication and treatment. He regained rational thought and was able to be more quickly released with the ability to safely live in the community. I am happy to say that today John is currently living in a rehabilitation group home. He visits his family almost every weekend. As a father it is a pleasure to see him smile again.

I strongly support HB 740 with the amendments proposed by the Maryland Chapter of SARDAA to promote prompt hospital admission for inmates in need of inpatient care prior to discharge and provide discharge planning to promote success in the community.