

Testimony for HB 740-Correctional Services-Restrictive Housing-Direct Release

House Judiciary Committee, Chairman Luke Clippinger

Date: Feb. 25, 2020, 1:00 pm

From: Star Gomez, Montgomery County

POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

HB 740 needs to be amended to require an examination to determine if the criteria for involuntary hospital admission are met, if it would help someone like my son. For over six weeks, my son, suffered greatly with untreated psychosis in Restrictive Housing in the Montgomery County Detention Center, while his psychiatric illness severely worsened, and he sustained physical injury.

If he had been released without hospital treatment and off medication, he would have very likely repeated the same behavior that resulted in his original arrest.

My son was arrested, when he was 20 years old and before we knew he had a mental illness. Being psychotic, he did not understand that he had a mental illness and needed medication, therefore he refused the medication in the jail. He did not understand why he was naked and cold in his cell, with bright lights on 24/7 and there were constant "cell checks". Because of his paranoia, he thought the guards were attacking him, so he resisted going out of his cell. He had to be dragged out for every cell check and would then try to run. **He was told that they always had to use "excessive force" because of his behavior. I was told "he's non-compliant, violent, resistant, and always trying to run" and was "written up for bad behavior, on disciplinary status, and would be held in segregation."**

I emailed and called anyone of relevance, pleading for help. I told them all that it was extremely obvious that my son was mentally ill and needed help, but no one listened until he was at last evaluated by a psychologist after six weeks. Then, he finally received 10 months of hospital treatment that he desperately needed.

I am asking each one of you to **please support HB740 with the amendments proposed by the Maryland Chapter of SARDAA**. This would greatly reduce the extreme suffering and psychiatric deterioration that our loved ones experience in a Restricted Housing due to untreated serious mental illness, as well as the terrible stress on their families and promote a successful discharge.