

Testimony for HB742-Corrections-Restrictive Housing-Assessments

House Judiciary Committee

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

From: K. Logan, Prince George's County

POSITION: SUPPORT with AMENDMENTS

My son has been put in solitary confinement or restrictive housing for extended periods because of behaviors **due to untreated schizophrenia**, both in a county jail and state prisons, rather than being admitted to a state hospital for appropriate treatment. **Unless HB 742 is amended to specifically include inmates who have threatened harm or been assaultive toward others and to require evaluation for certification for involuntary hospitalization for those put in restricted housing, it would provide no benefit to someone like my son. Only the state hospitals, not correctional facilities, can give involuntary medication if needed.**

While in jail and then prison, my son has become unstable due to medication changes or because he stopped taking his medication, due to his inability to recognize that he has an illness. When not taking psychiatric medication, my son becomes psychotic with distorted thoughts, severe paranoia and is out of touch with reality. **This psychosis caused assaultive behavior which resulted in disciplinary action, including restrictive housing.**

Medication relieves my son's symptoms and helps him cope with his illness. When taking medication, he is given prison work assignments and earns additional privileges for good conduct. Before his trial, he was treated at Clifton T. Perkins Hospital, the state forensic hospital, for 15 months and did voluntarily agree to medication. His illness improved significantly. Not only can state hospitals, unlike jails & prisons, give medication over objection when needed, but they have expert staff trained to work with patients to get them to accept medication voluntarily.

After arrest, my son was in solitary confinement for several months in the Upper Marlboro jail of Prince George's County, and while in the state prisons, in restrictive housing for 1-2 months at Patuxent Institute and for 2-3 months at North Branch Correctional Institution (NBCI). It is disturbing to me that with a clearly defined mental illness, he has been allowed to deteriorate several times to the point of becoming dangerous, even at Patuxent Institute which is a prison specializing in the care of those with mental illness. Their programs will not help if he refuses medication. **Repetedly, instead of being sent for needed hospital treatment, he received restrictive housing.**

Restrictive housing made his illness worse and caused great suffering. The lack of appropriate treatment may well have resulted in permanent brain deterioration and harm. According to U.S. Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Dr. McCance-Katz, "the longer a person goes without having their psychotic thinking ... treated, the more refractory their illness becomes over time."

This is not in anyone's best interest, particularly that of the prison staff. Eventually my son took monthly shots instead of medication by mouth and has had no more setbacks. **Hospital treatment quickly after a relapse could have stabilized him much sooner and avoided the need for any restrictive housing.**

Please pass HB306 with the amendments suggested by the Maryland Chapter of SARDAA to facilitate getting someone sick like my son evaluated and transferred to a psychiatric hospital for appropriate treatment.