

## **Testimony for HB1344 Mental Hygiene – Reform of Laws and delivery of Services**

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 19, 2021

From: Z. Smith, Bethesda, Montgomery County

Position: **SUPPORT**

My son has Bipolar Disorder.

In May I petitioned for an Emergency Evaluation. He was taken to Suburban Hospital and agreed to voluntary treatment for 6 days and improved. At discharge, he agreed to cooperate in treatment, and signed a treatment contract, but after he was out he refused to go or take the prescribed medicine. Of course, he deteriorated.

In June we did the hardest thing a parent can do: we put him out of our house. He was angry, and destructive. Now he is homeless in Montgomery County.

He has no money for food and sleeps in the parks. He comes to us very hungry and dehydrated on hot days. The first time he came to us, he looked so bad, I called the Mobile Crisis Team. I was told they could not even come out for an evaluation or help us because it was not yet clear that he met the criteria for presenting a danger to himself or others. When I called the police, they said they could not help either and told me to call the Crisis Center. When our son realized I was calling the police, he ran away.

The current danger standard is undefined and unclear. It will not help us prevent more deterioration or risk to our son. I am afraid to let him come home and I am afraid to leave him out there, homeless and hungry. I am afraid of what will happen to him or what he might do. Why should we have to wait until a person with a mental disorder is near death or harms someone to help them? **If the standard included risk of psychiatric deterioration, we would have been able to get him hospital treatment before he deteriorated so much that we had to make him homeless.**