

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

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 19, 2021

From: June Hill

**Position: SUPPORT**

My family has experienced great trauma & pain when denied access to timely hospital treatment for the treatment of psychosis in schizophrenia. These have included the **police refusing to petition my son for emergency evaluation rather than arresting him after he attacked his father, and my son severely cutting his own throat after being denied hospital admission.**

Our son was diagnosed with schizophrenia 15 years ago. He heard voices, was paranoid, anxious and fearful. Our son loves both his parents. Unfortunately, in a delusional state his brain triggers him to think we are plotting and trying to hurt him. **He knew there was something wrong with his brain but believed the problem is there is lead in his brain.** We could never leave the house because he would get up in the ceiling searching for the people he believed were trying to hurt him. **It is hard to believe how paranoia and fear so can consume an individual.**

**Nine years ago, he attacked his father, knocking him out and in the process his father suffered a broken tooth and damage to one ear. The police refused to take our son to a hospital. They took him to jail over our objections. He received no treatment, but three hours later he was out by a highway, still just as dangerous.**

Seven years ago my son's condition worsened with horrifying results. I heard him walking around the house at night. He had two large butcher knives, one in each hand. He said, "I'm not trying to hurt you. I'm just trying to get the people trying to get me." I convinced him to give me the knives.

A few days later he told me if I didn't get him to the hospital right away he knew he was going to die of a heart attack. He said he was anxious and wasn't getting any oxygen. He said he had something wrong with his brain, then his neck, then his back and chest. He said if I didn't hurry he would break the flat screen TV. I knew he was on the verge of another severe psychotic episode.

I took him to Calvert Memorial Hospital, but they refused to admit him. **Three days later he went into the bathroom and cut his throat, stabbed his chest, slit one wrist, and cut the other forearm severing the tendons.** This was a denial of a voluntary hospital admission, but it illustrates the **unpredictable nature of psychosis and the possible tragic consequences of delaying treatment of psychosis.**

He required more than one surgery to repair all the damage. He had a long recovery in the hospital complicated by his fear and paranoia. On discharge he was transferred to Sheppard Pratt hospital for psychiatric treatment. He received new medication at Sheppard Pratt and they kept him a month longer than the insurance authorized, absorbing the costs themselves. Eventually he moved to a supervised group home. He receives his meds and is picked up several times a week to see his therapist, caseworker, doctor and to attend group sessions. We are so pleased to see him doing so much better and no longer suffering the way he has in the past.

He has said he can't believe what he did and *he never wants to be in the bad place again.* **Timely treatment of psychosis as provided by HB 1344 could prevent other suicide attempts.**