

Testimony for HB 1344, Mental Health Law - Reform of Laws and Delivery of Service
House Health and Government Operations Committee
Date: March 19, 2021
From: Mary Ellen Moran, Bowie, Prince George's County
Position: SUPPORT

I have bipolar disorder and never have met the "danger standard" for involuntary commitment to a psychiatric hospital for treatment of my serious mental illness.

Current Maryland law provides that, among other things, "The individual presents a danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others." (Health-General §10-617(3)).

When I am stable, which is most of the time, I am able to function very well.

When I become hyper manic and then psychotic, my behavior is not threatening; it is weird. Also, I slip in and out of reality. I can't safely drive a car, prepare meals or take proper care of myself and my son, 58 years old, who lives with me as a result of his serious mental illness. Also, I cannot make a rational and informed decision on any matter including whether to seek treatment.

The "danger standard" in Maryland law needs to be changed to reflect the fact that many people do meet the standard of being unable to provide for their basic needs including food, clothing, shelter, health, and/or safety due to their mental illness. Also, they can suffer substantial deterioration of judgment, reasoning, or ability to control their behavior, and become unable to make a rational and informed decision as to whether to accept treatment.

This happened to me when visiting my sister in Virginia. She called 911 and a crisis response team was sent. I do not recall much about the event but do remember that a police officer talked me into going to the hospital. According to my sister, it took hours.

Upon arrival at the hospital, I apparently lost control and needed to be restrained. I was psychotic, slipped out of reality and was evaluated and admitted. I was in the hospital for seven days, became stable and was discharged. I then was able to safely resume activities of daily living.

It is concerning that some people think it violates my civil rights to receive involuntary treatment in the circumstances previously mentioned. I disagree. The "danger standard" needs to be changed so I have the right to treatment when I need it.

Please protect my right to treatment in the event I need it again and am too ill to know it, and give HB 1344 a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration.