

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

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 19, 2021

From: Kristina Granados, Hagerstown, Washington County

Position: SUPPORT

My brother has been sick with schizophrenia for 22 years. Maryland's vague undefined danger standard has 3 times been a barrier to his critically needed treatment. The result has been 4 traumatic violent attacks: on my father, my grandfather, my aunt and my uncle, the permanent disability and loss of employment for my uncle, the loss of a son's relationship with his father, the suffering of my brother with paranoid fears for over 5 years and living homeless on the street for almost a year, the cost to the state of millions of dollars for over 5 years in the criminal justice system and at Clifton T. Perkins Forensic Hospital, and now my brother is homeless for the second time and families with children, including mine, continue to live in fear of harm every day.

In his early twenties my brother began hearing voices and became extremely paranoid. My parents could not get him help because he was over 18, and completely unaware that he was sick and refused treatment. **He attacked and choked my father severely.** He agreed to voluntary hospital admission but checked himself out after 2 days because the inpatient doctors refused to certify him for involuntary admission.

My husband and I lived with my parents at the time, and on one occasion, because of his delusions **he threatened to kill us in our sleep.** The next day he told us he slept with a butcher knife under his bed in case he decided he needed to kill us in our sleep. The hospital recommended we call the police, who took him to the hospital. However, the **Emergency Room doctors refused to certify him for involuntary hospital admission.**

For our family to be safe, we could not allow him to come home. He was **homeless and on the streets almost a year.** Then my aunt and her family took him in against our advice. My grandfather lived with my aunt, and **my brother attacked him** on one occasion. One evening, **he beat my aunt and her husband in the head with a baseball bat.** Then he calmly called the police and stated he intended to kill them, but couldn't go through with it. **Susan and John were both hospitalized and John will remain on full disability as a result of this attack.**

My brother lost 5 years of his life as a patient/ inmate at Clifton T Perkins Forensic Hospital suffering with paranoid delusions. My brother finally received medication over objection which successfully treated his psychosis.

After discharge to an inpatient center, he moved to a halfway house program called Vesta. He **got a job at a gas station which he held for over a year, bought a car, AND mended relationships with his son and the rest of the family.** When all was well in his life again, **He stopped taking his meds.** He moved out of the halfway house program, and got an apartment on his own, so he didn't have to answer to anyone about his mental illness.

Now he has started having hallucinations and paranoid delusions again. he was accusing his roommate/landlord of cutting his hair while he was sleeping. He posted psychotic incoherent words as well as violent and sexually explicit messages on social media including "Feeling cute, think I might kill". He concocted a plan to be homeless and live in the woods near my family. This sent me

into a terrified panic mode, knowing he could show up at my door at any minute while he is psychotic. It made me feel that my children and family would not be safe in our own home.

I called the Anne Arundel County Mental Health Crisis team to see if they could petition my brother for emergency evaluation to get him needed hospital treatment **before** he became homeless or attacked his roommate, my family or a stranger. I sent them screen shots of his violent postings and thoughts of murder. I gave them his psychiatric, violent and criminal history. **The mobile crisis team went to his home but did not find at that moment that he was dangerous enough YET to meet the current danger standard** and were unable to help in any way. **The current danger standard did not allow them to take into account his past violent history while psychotic or his significant psychiatric deterioration.**

Research shows that the strongest predictor of violence by a person with mental illness is prior violence. How can a person like me protect my family when there is no one who can help until it's too late? Why do we continue to wait until the worst possible outcome happens before we help these medical patients with their illness?

Now my brother has been evicted because of his behavior and is homeless and living in his car. He recently also quit his job and said he is going to move. His son has been trying to reach him for 2 months. Nobody knows where he is or what condition he is in or if he is safe and able to care for himself. **My family is still in grave danger and lives in fear.**

It is absolutely SHAMEFUL that since 2002, families like mine have been pleading for help from Maryland legislators and administrators to change this danger standard to remove the barrier to care and nothing has been done for 19 years.

I am pleading with each one of you to pass HB1344 which defines the danger standard to include a grave disability with psychiatric deterioration and history taken into account. This will allow family, law enforcement, and medical professionals to help patients with serious mental illness get help when treatment is needed, not after someone has actually caused harm to oneself or others.