

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

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 19, 2021

From: Janet M. Boardman, Rockville, Montgomery County

Position: SUPPORT

As a parent of a 51 year old son who has paranoid schizophrenia, I strongly support HB13344.

My son was first diagnosed with his illness when he was 21 years old. He would see a doctor, take medications and seem better able to function, although over several years, he became sicker and sicker with each relapse, whenever he stopped taking his medications.

When he would tell me that that he no longer had schizophrenia, I knew that he was not taking his medications, and his insight had disappeared. At these times, he became belligerent, unable to care for himself and eventually physically violent. He was hospitalized 13 times, 8 times in 2 years alone, 5 of which were involuntary

When he refused to be hospitalized voluntarily, we had to wait until he became violent before he was judged to meet the current involuntary hospitalization standard of “presents a danger to the individual or to others” Being unable to take of himself and his survival needs was not enough to meet involuntary hospitalization criteria, even with his past history of violent behavior. The result was he hit me, his sister, his dad, a good friend, and several others in the public. His belligerent behavior also put himself at risk of victimization and after starting a fight in a nightclub ended up with a black eye. After he violently attacked his dad, he ended up in the criminal justice system, where he finally got three weeks of hospitalization.

**None of us should have to wait for violent behavior or criminalization to get hospital treatment for our family member.**

I ask you to support HB1344 because I believe it will facilitate earlier treatment and hospitalization for very ill people with serious mental illness before they become violent or incarcerated.