

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

House Judiciary Committee

Date: March 19, 2021

From: K. Logan, Prince George's County

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Danger Standard for hospital admission resulted in the denial of hospital treatment for schizophrenia for my son in the community and resulted in the death of two peace officers. The Danger standard also resulted in the denial of hospital treatment while in Maryland jail and prisons, resulting in suffering and deterioration in restricted housing several times for months.

In mid-August 2002 my son began showing clear signs of serious mental illness. The following events took place in the span of a week leading up to the deaths of two sheriffs.

James came to our house with his family. He was extremely agitated, afraid someone was following him, hearing and seeing things clearly not there. Due to the family history of serious mental illness, we suspected this was an onset of his illness.

Our first attempt to get him help was taking him to the emergency room at Prince George's Hospital. He and his father met with a psychiatrist, who said James needed to be admitted. James told his father that the doctor had strange eyes and he was "one of those people" after him, so he wasn't admitting himself. His father tried to convince him to stay but James refused.

Our son refused outpatient treatment and hid his symptoms when we called the police and with his primary care doctor. His paranoia got worse and he hadn't slept or eaten anything for over 24 hours. His wife and I went to the courthouse to put in an emergency petition for an evaluation. We informed the judge that James said that he wasn't going to be around much longer and he was sent here for a purpose and he had to fulfill that purpose. The judge ordered that James be taken to a hospital for an evaluation. This was the fifth and last attempt to get treatment.

Two sheriffs came that evening to pick up my son, but was so paranoid by this time that he felt they were a threat to him and his family. He thought it was his duty to destroy them, resulting in the death of the two officers.

James has been incarcerated ever since this tragedy occurred. During a 15 month hospitalization prior to trial, he agreed to medication that helped him cope with his illness. He was given work assignments and additional privileges for good conduct. However, when his paranoia returned due to medication changes or discontinuation, he was too ill to realize the need for medicine. His behavior resulted several times in disciplinary action and restricted housing for months at a time with further psychiatric deterioration. Even in prison he was allowed to deteriorate to the point of committing a dangerous act rather than being given hospital treatment.

HB1344 would facilitate involuntarily treatment for individuals that are too mentally ill to recognize the need for medication. If HB1344 had been law, things could have been different for my family and the families of the two sheriff's that lost their lives.