

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

House Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: March 19, 2021

From: Charles Ippolito, Howard County

POSITION: SUPPORT

I am the father of a 50 year old son who suffers with a form of paranoid schizophrenia. He became ill approximately four years ago. In addition to paranoia and delusions, he suffers with the symptom anosognosia – lacking awareness that he is ill – and regularly refuses any treatment.

In the early stages of his illness, while in Massachusetts my son became involved with the criminal justice system and was placed on probation in court-ordered treatment for his illness. Therefore when he returned to Maryland, he was taken to a hospital for evaluation. The hospital told him that unless he was going to harm himself or someone else, he could not be admitted, even though the Massachusetts court recognized that he needed treatment and had ordered it.

Because he was denied hospitalization in Maryland, he has become psychotic, delusional, angry and withdrawn. Outpatient treatment in Maryland has not worked either, because he is not compliant with the ordered treatment.

My son has been very ill. He is now divorced, and was evicted. He spends his days detached from society, and not communicating his thoughts to anyone.

His young children are deprived of a normal relationship with their father. They are also deprived of his financial support, including government benefits since he will not apply for disability benefits. His only appearance to his children is via court ordered SKYPE sessions where he watches his growing sons play in front of his screen or occasional 2 hour supervised visits where he serves as a playmate but converses and interacts little.

I am very fearful of what will happen to him as he is not capable of rational thought.

Because of restrictions in the involuntary commitment laws I can't help my son get effective treatment despite his very real needs. **Please help clarify the law to permit timely evaluation and hospital treatment. Please help before a tragedy befalls my son because his illness is untreated. Treatment could give me back my son, and give his children their father back. Please support HB1344!**