

Your Name: Jesse Robertson, LMSW

Date of Hearing: Tuesday February 16th, 2021 at 1:30pm

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Sponsored by: Delegate Sheila Ruth

Bill Number: HB0537

Full Title of the Bill: Mental Health Law – Petitions for Emergency Evaluation – Procedures

Position: In Support of Passing HB0537/SB0398

Hello all and thank you for this opportunity to share my experience in regards to HB0537/SB0398. I am currently employed as a psychotherapist for Geriatric and Traumatic Brain Injury patients at a hospital based Community Psychiatry Program in Baltimore. In my time working there I have had to EP a number of patients, mostly from the geriatric end of the population I serve.

As the law stands now, I have called police of individuals who do not drive there own vehicles and are not flight risks, individuals in walkers, and individuals with canes. Almost always police and paramedics have responded to these calls and while the police have been polite in their duty, they have mostly stood in the hallway while the paramedics ushered patients into the ambulance. All of this while the families and patients are requesting that either their loved ones or myself transport them to the hospital if they had to go.

While I think there are many reasons why police should not respond to mental health crises I want to make the case for how much of a waste of resources this is and how absurd it is for police to *have* to respond to these situations. Imagine your grandmother in a walker, threatening to take her own life, and then police officers showing up and try to put her in the back of a police car. Or police officers waiting in a hallway for EMT's to arrive to avoid having to put them in the back of a police car. Public funds are being wasted on this and it is to the benefit of no one.

I am aware that there are times where individuals pose a threat to others and there are times where individuals pose a flight risk. These are situations where resources need to be focused to protect public safety. This however, is not the case for many of the EP's that are done in this state. This is why I'm in support of passing HB0537/SB0398. Please allow the grandmother's of this state to get the help they need with the dignity they deserve. Thank you.