

Testimony for HB1017

March 9, 2022, 1:00 pm, House Health & Government Operations Committee

From: ZD, Bethesda, Montgomery County, MD

Position: **FAVORABLE**

AOT could have saved my son years of visits to the emergency room and now homelessness.

My 28-year old son has bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder and personality disorder. He has been ill for approximately 8 years, and has been to the emergency room and hospital many times.

In May, 2021 I petitioned for an Emergency Evaluation. He was taken to Suburban Hospital and agreed to voluntary treatment for 6 days and improved. At discharge, he agreed to cooperate in treatment, and signed a treatment contract, but after he was out he refused to go or take the prescribed medicine. He does not accept that he has a mental illness. Of course, he deteriorated.

In June we did the hardest thing a parent can do: we put him out of our house. He was angry, and destructive. Now he is homeless in Montgomery County. He has no money to eat and sleeps in the parks. He comes to us very hungry and dehydrated on hot days. The first time he came to us, he looked so bad.

I am afraid to let him come home and I am afraid to leave him out there, homeless and hungry. I am afraid of what will happen to him or what he might do.

Why we must wait for a crime to happen before we help someone who is clearly suffering serious mental illness? If AOT was available, then my son and I wouldn't be going through a such a horrible experience.

There is no question in my mind that this experience has left a permanent scar on both my son and myself. Please pass the AOT pilot bill as a first step to helping my son, myself and families like ours.