



Testimony for HB32 Mental Health Law - Petitions for Emergency Evaluation- Electronic Record
House: Health and Government Operations Committee

Date: January 26, 2022

From: Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance
Evelyn Burton, Maryland Advocacy Chair

Position: SUPPORT

The Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance strongly supports SB 2.

When an authorized medical professional or peace officer determines that an individual's behavior is indicative of a mental disorder and presents emergency evaluation a danger to self or others, emergency evaluation is the first step necessary to provide needed inpatient treatment to those whose illness itself, makes them unable to realize their critical need for treatment.

Prompt emergency evaluation can mean the difference between life and death. It can prevent suicides, violence, and victimization.

SB 2 facilitates emergency evaluation by permitting an emergency petition to be in the form of an electronic record. Electronic processing will make petitioning easier and waste significantly less time for the outpatient provider, reducing the likelihood of delay. This would expedite processing and the individual could be evaluated and receive needed treatment sooner.

Research has shown that it is essential to receive effective treatment for a serious mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder as soon as possible, to avoid brain damage¹, a worsening of the condition, and reduced chance of recovery. This is especially important for individuals with psychosis where "an increase in DUP [duration of untreated psychosis] from 1 week to 4 weeks is associated with >20% more severe symptoms."² Prompt treatment of severe mental illness can also reduce the social consequences of untreated serious mental illness, including homelessness, arrest, and incarceration. ³

Therefore, we request that SB 2 be given a favorable report.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

NOTES

¹ Gerald Martone. Is psychosis toxic to the brain? Current Psychiatry April 2020 p12-13

<https://cdn.mdedge.com/files/s3fs-public/CP01904012.PDF>

²Howes, O.D et al (2021) The clinical significance of duration of untreated psychosis: an umbrella review and random-effects meta-analysis. World Psychiatry, 20(1), 75-95.

³Consequences of Non-Treatment <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/key-issues/consequences-of-non-treatment>