

ORAL AND WRITTEN TESTIMONY

SB582

TUESDAY MARCH 7, 2023

1:30 SENATE HEARING

The mental health care system in the state has failed my teenage daughter. My name is Shelley and I support this bill because because a comprehensive assessment of Maryland's behavioral health services and telemedicine should be evaluated and how to acquire meaningful metrics therapists, psychiatrists and Drs should meet and exceed to get the mental health of our youth back on track.

The isolation caused by the Covid pandemic has impacted our youth and, as recognized by a recent CDC report, particularly affected teenage girls. My daughter, living with her father, was in the 8th grade when the pandemic began and stayed isolated at home without going to school for the next 4 years. When in-person learning resumed, my teenager did not attend school. Her father was rarely at home and did not connect her with telemedicine. Her father was able to convince a health-care professional to sign off on my daughter attending school through a "home/hospital" program rather than attending an out-patient clinic or tele therapy as a first step. Her school work deteriorated and her isolation only harmed her more.

Last year, her father chose to dump her off at a Level 4 In-Patient Psychiatric Facility rather than dealing with her educational needs. After just a 20 minute telemedicine Zoom meeting with an in-patient personnel, which is a conflicts of interest, my daughter was admitted to the Eating Disorders wing. My daughter does not have an eating disorder.

During her 3 weeks there, I spoke with her by phone and visited regularly-It was obvious to me that the in-patient facility was not helping her and was causing her more pain and suffering. My daughter demanded to be released and at first those demands were ignored, despite the law requiring her to be released or involuntarily committed within 72 hours. It was not until lawyers from the State of Maryland intervened on her behalf that she was allowed to go home.

My 16-year-old daughter's ordeal has not ended, as her father, once again, has attempted to have her attend school home/hospital school program. This time a nurse, whom is not providing any actual care for my daughter other than evaluating her medications, sign the document as on the basis of "well, she's not going to school anyways," without reading medical records. The school system rejected the application, and now at risk for dropping out of school and suffering from further isolation.

My daughter's experience with the health care system in Maryland demonstrates the importance of evaluating individual gaps in behavioral health care and not merely by

examining statistics and to make recommendations for changes. Please support the overhaul of how therapists are assessed during remote zoom therapy sessions and what red flag criteria therapists must abide by when to send a person to a local out-patient clinic as a series of proper escalation steps.