



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

HB 823 - Mental Health Law - Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs

DATE: March 14, 2023
COMMITTEE: House Health and Government Operations Committee
POSITION: Favorable
FROM: The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

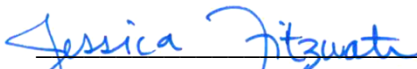
As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give HB 823 - Mental Health Law - Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs a favorable report. This bill will allow counties to establish assisted outpatient treatment programs, providing local governments with an additional tool to address the mental health crisis.

Assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) is the practice of delivering outpatient treatment under a civil court order to a small, high-risk subset of individuals with severe mental illness (SMI). The court and the mental health system work collaboratively to assist individuals with SMI to engage in treatment and ensure that the mental health system is attentive to their needs. The order requires following an individualized treatment plan, designed with input from the AOT participant, for one year, monitored by the local mental health system. This allows time for lasting stabilization on medication & treatment.

As the Frederick County Executive, I have been working closely with partners, public and private, to address the mental and behavioral health challenges we see in the community and ensure residents of Frederick County have access to a comprehensive continuum of behavioral health care. I lean on experts in our Behavior Health Services Division, Health Department, and Local Behavioral Health Authority to build a system of care that prioritizes the wellbeing and integrity of patients and residents. Despite having a robust combination of traditional and nontraditional services, there is still a gap in care for those with severe and persistent mental illness who lack the capacity to direct their own care. This challenge is not unique to Frederick County; leaders across our state are looking for creative solutions. This bill aims to offer local governments one more tool to fill this gap.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 823. I commend the bill sponsors for introducing this bill and I urge the committee to give it a favorable report.

Respectfully,



Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive
Frederick County, MD