

HB823 Mental Health Law – Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs

Dhyana Parker, President, Founder

Position: FAVORABLE

On August 14, 1994 I lost my younger brother to Suicide. During that time the stigma in the black community on mental illness and suicide was something we never discussed. Unfortunately, in our community we were raised with the understanding that Suicide was a White person disease. After my brother's death, I went into a deep depression. I was afraid to get the necessary help that I needed because of the fear of losing my job due to the stigma.

The stigma against Mental Illness is primarily caused by behaviors due to untreated mental illness. By providing a path to treatment for those who struggle with compliance with voluntary treatment, I feel that AOT will help to get rid of that stigma and allow people to get the help that they need.

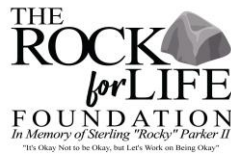
In the last 3 years, I've had several family members not being adequately treated by Maryland's current voluntary only system of outpatient care. Some have lost their homes and jobs and it stems from the fact that the resources available are not helping those who struggle to comply with voluntary services often because brain disfunction caused by the illness prevents them from understanding their need for treatment.

The fact that Maryland is one of only 3 states that has not supported the AOT program, is unacceptable and it seems that you don't care about your Maryland residents. It's allowing that stigma against Mental Illness to stay. In the last few days, I've met a daughter whose mom is dealing with Suicidal Ideation, and I received a message from a father who's daughter is dealing with Suicidal Ideations as well. The AOT program can give these families some sort of hope that people really do care about them and their wellbeing.

Our system is broken when dealing with Mental Illness. It's easier to get a stadium built then it is for us to get the necessary support for Mental Illness. I will continue to fight in honor of my brother who's no longer here and for those that are still here and fighting everyday just to get out of bed. I will be their voice. It's sad that we have to come here today to fight for something that's affects us all in some aspect.

The benefits of AOT:

I will have less calls of my family members being sent to jail because they had a breakdown and no one completely understand what they are dealing with.



They will spend less time being in the hospital and then sent back on the street to start the cycle all over again.

They will feel that they have a chance with being part of the AOT program. This program will give them hope for a better life.

Less violent behaviors.

The AOT program will provide hope for families that are dealing with this on a day-to-day basis.

The main thing is hope that this program can cut down on the Suicide Rate. At some point in our lives we will lose a loved one, but Losing a family member to Suicide is a hurt that you can't repair. Knowing that someone you loved was hurting so bad mentally, that they felt the best option was to take their life. I don't want any other family to deal with that type of pain and the AOT program, can help.

Please give HB823 a favorable report and show that you are not willing to accept the suicide of more of our loved ones this year, that could be saved by AOT.

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