



**FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

Jessica Fitzwater  
*County Executive*

**HB 576 – Mental Health – Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures  
and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs**

**DATE:** February 14, 2024  
**COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations Committee  
**POSITION:** Favorable  
**FROM:** The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

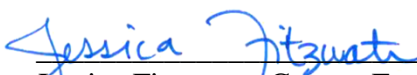
As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give HB 576 – Mental Health – Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs a favorable report.

This bill will require counties to establish an assisted outpatient treatment program and provides a framework for how to do so.

The State of Maryland is currently facing a behavioral health crisis which is impacting the wellbeing of our communities and putting a strain on our hospital systems and law enforcement resources. One pathway to easing this burden is to create Assisted Outpatient Treatment programs for those who may benefit from this approach rather than a detention center or hospital stay. Currently, Frederick County has a comprehensive system of care with a mix of traditional and alternative services. We have excellent working relationships with local agencies and community partners. Through our partnerships, we have demonstrated significant positive health outcomes for those with severe and persistent mental illness; yet we still struggle to serve a handful of individuals with complex behavioral and mental health needs.

HB 576 is a vital first step in assisting those who are struggling with behavioral health issues. This program, if funded adequately, may save lives, reduce hospitalization length of stays, reduce repeat emergency department use, and reduce the number of arrests and incarceration rates. By providing Counties with the frameworks and resources necessary to carry out these programs, the State has the potential to make a large impact on helping some of our most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 576. I applaud the Governor for this forward-thinking approach to addressing this crisis and I urge you to advance this bill with a favorable report.

  
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Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive  
Frederick County, MD