



**Montgomery County Federation of Families for  
Children's Mental Health, Inc.**

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**SB 453 Mental Health - Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures and Assisted  
Outpatient Treatment Programs**

Senate Finance Committee

February 20, 2024

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

I am Celia Serkin, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Inc. (MC Federation of Families), a family peer support organization serving diverse families in Montgomery County who have children, youth, and/or young adults with mental health, substance use, or co-occurring challenges. Our Certified Family Peer Specialists are parents who have raised or are currently raising children with mental health, substance use, and/or co-occurring challenges. I am a Montgomery County resident and have two children, now adults, who have struggled since their childhood with mental health challenges. My son has debilitating depression. My daughter has co-occurring challenges.

MC Federation of Families is pleased to support **SB 453 Mental Health - Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs**.

SB 453 requires a peace officer, when the peace officer receives a petition for emergency evaluation for an individual, to transport the emergency evaluatee to a nearby emergency facility, rather than the nearest emergency facility; authorizes a psychiatric nurse practitioner to evaluate an emergency evaluatee for purposes of involuntary admission; authorizes the Maryland Department of Health to require the admission of an emergency evaluatee to an appropriate facility, rather than requiring the Department to provide for the admission within a certain time period; requires each county to establish an assisted outpatient treatment program; requires the Office of the Public Defender to provide representation in assisted outpatient treatment proceedings; and generally relates to the procedures for emergency evaluation and involuntary admission and assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) programs.

MC Federation of Families supports SB 453 because it improves treatment compliance and quality of life for adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and ultimately save lives. AOT significantly reduces hospitalizations, arrests, incarceration, homelessness, violence, and victimization in states where it is practiced. AOT will help adults with SMI, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, with a history of hospitalizations, incarcerations or threats or acts of harm to self or others resulting from a lack of compliance with treatment for their SMI. These individuals often have diminished awareness of the need for treatment, caused by the illness itself. They are unlikely to adhere to treatment without an

AOT plan, and need treatment to prevent deterioration that would create a substantial risk of serious harm to the individual or to others.

As a family peer support organization, we have witnessed the devastating consequences of those suffering from SMI who are untreated, including death. We have seen those with SMI continuously going through revolving doors of repeat hospitalization, incarceration, and homelessness because they are unable due to their illness to recognize that they need treatment.

MC Federation of Families urges this committee to pass SB 453.