

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

Testimony for SB 453

Finance Committee

Date: February 20, 2024

From: Carmen A., Montgomery County

POSITION: FAVORABLE

I have a very close family member who suffers from serious mental illness. She has a long history of hospitalizations - **about 25 hospitalizations to no avail.**

She would be discharged after a very short time, at the most one week, with no follow-up services which lead to dropping her medication.

My family member has been **homeless** for about 3 years, after being discharged from several hospital stays. It became a pattern: hospital, shelter, hospital, shelter. When in shelters, there was no proper follow-up amid unsanitary conditions, and she was even **victimized by care takers and other shelter users. All outpatient treatments have proven a failure.**

Meanwhile, she **lost insight to her illness and need of treatment.** She was thrown out of the shelter she was in due to behavior resulting from lack of treatment and in a total state of psychosis she was accused of committing a felony. After **two years between jail and forensic hospitalization**, confronted with a slow and complicated judicial system, the felony charge was dropped for lack of evidence. But a second-degree assault charge remained, placing her on probation for 3 years. All this waiting turned into a devastating situation of uncertainty and injustice. Back in a shelter, she needs to wait again for housing that will hopefully include access to an Assisted Outpatient Treatment program.

I believe there must be a more humane, effective, and less costly way of taking care of our population with mental illness. One step in a good direction would be to establish an **Assisted Outpatient Treatment** program in Maryland. As developed by SAMHSA and the Treatment Advocacy Center, AOT has shown proven results in reducing homelessness and incarceration.

I request that the Committee give a favorable report to SB453.

Thank you for working towards the improvement of a broken, inhuman, and costly system.