

SB 453 Testimony.
Trevor & Genevieve Albuquerque
7000 Cashell Manor Court
Derwood, MD 20855
POSITION: Support

We are the parents of a 40-year-old son who suffers from Paranoid Schizophrenia and who has experienced incarceration. Maryland's current policy of denying timely psychiatric hospital treatment when requested by a physician causes great suffering and urgently needs to be changed.

It is hard to describe the suffering we saw our son endure, while in the Frederick County Adult Detention Center while refusing medication because of his untreated psychosis. With **schizophrenia and no medication, he was deadly scared of all jail personnel. He was going through hell with his paranoia.**

It is also impossible to explain the agony and helplessness we felt as parents watching our son suffer. We fervently wish he had been transferred sooner to an inpatient hospital bed.

Our son, who I will call "John," was first diagnosed in 2005 when he was a senior at the University of Maryland. He responded well to medication completed undergraduate degrees in Mathematics and Computer Engineering. Despite obtaining an excellent job, he stopped his medication in 2012 and went downhill fast.

In October 2015, John spent a month in the Frederick County Adult Detention Center after being arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace and second-degree assault. He was seen by a psychiatrist and offered medication but again refused.

He was considered a suicide risk. This meant that he was kept in an isolated open cell, with the lights and cameras on 24/7 with only a toilet bowl in one corner of the cell. He had to wear a poncho with nothing else. When removed from the cell for any reason, he was shackled hand and foot. He did not have the use of a phone. His only contact with the outside world was for 30 minutes a week across a glass security barrier via a phone that did not work too well. And all this for the major crime of being mentally ill.

We know that staff were trying to protect his life. We do not feel the staff mistreated him. Our aim is simply to **describe how extremely difficult and tortuous being in Restrictive Housing can be for someone with an untreated serious mental illness, even when humane care is given.**

Once in the hospital, with a calmer setting and experienced, trained staff, John did agree to medication and treatment. He was found not criminally responsible and today he is back in the community, currently living at home helping his aged parents and whenever needed taking care of his 18-month-old niece. As a parent it is a pleasure to see him smile again.

My wife and I strongly support SB 453. This bill is very important to saving our loved ones from a horrible existence of cycling in & out of hospitals, jails and homelessness and even dying by suicide. Treatment and hospitalization is the correct way to go and not incarceration or homelessness.