

Senate Finance Committee, February 19, 2024:

Testimony in opposition to SB453 - UNFAVORABLE

Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Constance Lesold, MSW Smith College SSW, 1965.

Only 3 states have no AOT laws, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. As these laws are very controversial, it is essential that Maryland remain without AOT laws as a state where comparisons can be made as to what works and what does not work!

I am 86 years old with 78 years of observing a wide variety of psychiatric practices, as a family member and a professional social worker. My father returned from World War II in Italy in 1945 with what you might call SMI. The treatments he endured included ECT and lobotomy. You may be aware that the person who invented lobotomy won the Nobel Prize for medicine. The history of psychiatric treatment is full of terrible mistakes. It is your responsibility as legislators, not just Drs. to First Do No Harm. Please take a cautious, long visioned approach to mental health planning and give voluntary treatment efforts, well funded, in at least three states. As the coordinator of the Brooklyn Mental Hygiene Court Monitors Project I witnessed the first AOT case in Brooklyn, a black, middle aged, female veteran with a long history of alcoholism. She only asked for the Social Worker for AOT to be black. Neither white lawyers or the judge paid any attention to this request. So much for cultural competence! In Brooklyn the court clients are mainly black or immigrant background. I don't know about Maryland. I don't know of good outcomes and I have followed many. Thanks for paying some attention. You can contact me with questions. Give people a chance for dignity in court. Try voluntary in the three states for scientific and human purposes. Also take a look at the UN Treaty on the rights of people with disabilities. Forced treatment is not popular there. In colonial days in the Americas, with slavery, everyone was "crazy" who didn't support slavery. How do you want to be seen in history?

Sincerely, Constance Lesold, MSW