

HB576 (AOT) Testimony  
Lauren Davenport  
Representing Montgomery County  
Position: Favorable

I have lived my entire childhood and adult life witnessing psychotic relapses—police handcuffing and transporting—involuntary hospitalizations—the screaming insanity, the stress, the heartbreak and all of the trauma these situations cause for all involved. Without Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT), there is little family members can do to keep their loved ones healthy and sane. What will keep someone in treatment who doesn't recognize they're ill?

My mother, a lifelong resident of Montgomery County, is turning 70 years old. She's a loving and generous mom and grandma who writes poetry, knits, and serves as a volunteer in her community. When she was 19, she was hospitalized for the first time with psychosis. Due to non-compliance with treatment (anosognosia symptoms where she doesn't recognize her illness), I have experienced the havoc of untreated severe mental illness. I've been involved, along with other family members, in numerous attempts to get my mom treatment in Maryland. Year after year. Cycling in and out again and again.

After finally getting admitted involuntarily and treated by court order, within weeks of being home, she would go right back to non-compliance and never get better. She lost her job. She nearly lost her housing. If AOT was available, we would have had recourse and back-up to keep her safe and in a state of recovery.

The difference treatment can make is life-changing. My mom has finally been accepting treatment for the past 3 years and her siblings play an active part in getting her to her appointments every 3 weeks for medication. My mom and I have a beautiful relationship today. But she will still tell you she doesn't need the medication. The anosognosia still exists. But her last hospitalization was very traumatic. She never wants to experience that—as she says, “arrest”—again. As her daughter, I also don't want to relive it.

If the idea of not getting “arrested” again keeps her treatment compliant, I'm grateful. Ultimately, that's exactly what AOT is—requiring by law that those with severe illness stay on treatment to continue living in the community. Whether they realize it or not, it's what will keep them in recovery and allow them a chance to keep a job, a roof over their head, and have positive relationships with family and friends. For others, it will keep them out of jail and save lives.

Just across the river, in Virginia where I live, Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) is available. Less than one hour away, there are families getting the help they need to keep their loved ones in treatment and avoid the scary alternatives too numerous to count. Maryland families and loved ones deserve better. Please vote yes for HB576 to bring AOT to Maryland.