

Favorable HB576  
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I am a mother of a 25-year-old young adult son who is diagnosed with a severe mental illness (SMI). Over the past several years, my son has had several inpatient psychiatric admissions. I had to obtain an Emergency Petition to get him the medical help that he needed.

Upon discharge from the hospital, very often, there is no coordination or connection to outpatient treatment services. Caregivers are expected to fill the gap and link their loved ones to voluntary treatment. This is very challenging and stressful on families.

Last year, within weeks of being discharged from a Prince George's County (PGC) hospital, my son was re-admitted to the same hospital! I had to advocate for something different to happen upon discharge to prevent him from being homeless. My son was admitted to a voluntary residential crisis service (RCS) in Charles County. Today, my son is doing so much better because the RCS was life altering. I want his recovery to continue!

Knowing things could change with having a SMI, an AOT program would provide a treatment option to connect our loved ones to outpatient services. This would lift the burden currently placed on families and caregivers.

While it is sadly too late for some with an SMI, passing an AOT bill will save the lives of others with a SMI. Please see the Op-Ed in the February 5 edition of the Baltimore Sun about the loss of life at: <https://www.baltimoresun.com/2024/02/05/maryland-assisted-outpatient>

Studies show that AOT programs reduce hospitalizations, violent behavior, and victimization. On top of that, incidents of arrest and incarceration decrease as well. Further, an AOT program could decrease the illegal use of substances and homeless nights, helping counties to save money in ways unimaginable.

It is time for Maryland to join the 47 other states that have laws to authorize an AOT program. Let's help to ensure that no Marylander will be left behind. Please add your voice to the thousands of us crying for an AOT program in Maryland. Together, we can save lives.

Thank you for reading my testimony. Please give a favorable report to HB576.