

## HB576 Testimony

Morgan McCulley, Montgomery County

Position: FAVORABLE

Hello, My name is Morgan McCulley. I have been working with individuals with severe mental illness for 10 years. I have worked with individuals that have benefited from AOT in the District of Columbia where this is referred to as a Civil Outpatient Commitment. I had one client specifically that would not have been compliant with his treatment due to the severity of his mental illness. For the purpose of this testimony I will refer to him as Mark. Mark was diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder and presented as a child. His cognitive functioning was at the level of a 10 year old and he loved superheroes. Mark was only compliant with his treatment team and group home due to his Civil Outpatient Commitment. Without this, he would have been living on the streets as he did not understand how to manage his finances or the need for stable housing. He did not understand that his medications would help his symptoms and prevent him from being hospitalized. One of the best things that the commitment for treatment order did was allow for his treatment team to establish a representative payee for his funds to ensure that he did not have large sums of money on him in the community and also ensured that his housing was paid every month. We would meet with him weekly to get some money out and support him back to his home as drug dealers would follow him to the ATM on days that they knew he would be paid. He did not understand that these people were taking advantage of him and would freely give them his money. Without the security of housing in which his medications and meals were supervised, he would have died on the streets. His mental illness was so severe that he did not have insight into his needs and personal safety. His Civil Outpatient Commitment was the reason that he was alive and cared for. I think that it is vitally important for individuals like Mark to have AOT in the state of Maryland so that others' lives can be saved.

In my research on ethical based practices with this population of adults, it is vital that clients feel a sense of efficacy and autonomy over their own lives. YES, and it is instructive to note that when applied well, AOT improves quality of life. 81% of patients in New York's program, for example, said AOT helped them to get and stay well; 75% said it helped them gain control over their lives. I hope that soon, Maryland will be able to report similar statistics and not numbers that reflect the higher incarceration, arrest, violence and escalating health care costs that the current revolving door perpetuates. We must protect the most vulnerable in our society and AOT is one step in achieving that goal which is why I am asking for your support in passing HB576.