

Testimony for HB 0576 - Mental Health Law - Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs  
House Committee  
Chair: Pena-Melnyk  
Date: February 14, 2024

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## Position: SUPPORT

Hello, my name is Lisa Bass Cooper, and I am testifying in support of HB 576 on behalf of my daughter, a 37-year-old Silver Spring resident, whom I recently was awarded guardianship of because of her serious mental illness.

My daughter suffers from both bipolar and schizoaffective disorder. For the past five years, she has been hospitalized more than 20 times because of her lack of insight and periodic resistance to medication because of known debilitating side effects. This resistance to taking medication has resulted in incarceration because of an arm injury she inflicted to a medical staffer who entered her room at 2 am in the morning. When he reported the next day with the injury, my daughter was arrested from her hospital and transported to the county's psychiatric lock-up. She has no recollection of the encounter with the medical technician. If the AOT law had been in place, we would not have suffered the trauma of her 75 days in jail without medication or family contact during the COVID pandemic.

Upon her release, I rented an apartment for her in the county so she could be compliant with Mental Health Court and have her record expunged. She achieved that goal and graduated.

But within 48 hours, she announced she was not taking medication because of the threat of developing tardive dyskinesia. Despite our pleading, she went unmedicated for five months, resulting in a revolving door of hospitalizations due to rapid cycling mania and delusions. Eventually, after nine (9) hospitalizations over this 15-month period and ECT treatments she appears to be on track for recovery. However, at any point, she may lose insight into her illness, and will need a law like the one before you today to speed her recovery and keep her and the community from harm.

I hope that you will join many other states that understand mental illness and pass this important legislation, Thank you for listening.