

Favorable **HB 576**

Stacy Derrick

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I am writing to ask for your support **HB 576**.

I am a professional in the mental health field. I am the co-founder of Help in the Home. Help in the Home specializes in working with individuals who have a severe and persistent mental illness.

AOT is the practice of placing an individual with severe mental illness under court order to adhere to outpatient treatment to maintain the individual's health and safety. It is a tool appropriate for a small subset of high risk, very ill individuals who lack the capacity to recognize their illness, causing them to refuse and avoid voluntary treatment options. Maryland is one of only three states that does not have a statewide statute authorizing involuntary treatment in the community or AOT(reference). I am going to share about one of our clients who needs AOT.

Our client, we will call him Jon, is an elderly African American male who is diagnosed with Schizophrenia and has a long history of repeated hospitalizations and releases. For years, Jon has been in and out of hospitals and jail. He has been emergency petitioned well over 20 times with one arrest, and has been kicked out of 3 different apartments for property damage and disturbance of others due to his behavior. Each time he was discharged to a rehab or a crisis center for anywhere from 3 days to 2 weeks. In 2017 with no other choice he ended up at the mens shelter in Rockville. In a span of 2 months he was emergency petitioned from the shelter 4 times. Out of the 4 times I was only able to convince a social worker to keep him for an extra couple days one time. She released him to a different shelter where he walked out and disappeared on the first day. It is only by chance that Jon has not harmed anyone yet. Jon continues on this vicious cycle with no government interference. Jon deserves to have AOT.

AOT can be life-savings. This evidence-based treatment has been proven to reduce hospitalizations, arrests, homelessness and incarceration. Many people who suffer from serious mental illness are unable to recognize that they have a disorder (anosognosia) and need assistance. AOT gives mental health professionals and families another tool to help treat people suffering from serious mental illness in a community-based setting. Without assisted outpatient treatment, family members

cannot intervene to get necessary mental health treatment for their loved ones. Studies show that AOT can dramatically improve treatment outcomes and substantially reduce the likelihood of repeat hospitalization and criminal justice involvement for its target population.

Please support **HB 576** favorably. Thank you for your time.

Stacy Derrick,

Co-founder

Help in the Home

