

HB576 Testimony  
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Position: FAV

My name is Katherine McCune, and I am a member of NAMI Maryland. I am the mother of a 35-year-old son diagnosed with schizophrenia four years ago. His name is Sebastian, but he goes by Zeb. Zeb does not believe he has an illness; he “can’t remember” any doctor giving him a diagnosis. This lack of ability to see one’s own illness, is very common in people suffering with mental illness. But Zeb does admit he hears voices and sometimes they are command voices, which tell him to do things. He doesn’t like the voices and he does fight their commands. The results are that he is exhausted and depressed.

My son has had six hospitalizations, four of which have been in the LAST twelve months, on average he is hospitalized every three months. He is in the hospital now as I write. Every time he has been released from his hospital program, he has medications to take and follow up doctors to see. One would think that this would be of great help; one would think that he would have a good chance of recovery. But, every time I try to enforce his treatment plan, he decides the plan won’t work; that it’s not worth following. He’s smart. He reads a lot. He tries dietary remedies that were espoused by Linus Pauling sixty years ago, to treat schizophrenia. He takes thousands of mg of Vit C every day. He jogs in the park. “Diet and exercise” are his mantra. He distrusts medicine.

Unfortunately, his disease cannot be cured by diet and exercise. He needs to take his medication and he needs to talk with his doctors so they can adjust his medicines, so they have optimal effect. Myself and my husband, alone, have not been able to convince Zeb of what he needs to do for recovery. Every three months, without his medication, he returns to the hospital for the same treatment.

He’s stuck in a revolving door. I know many other families are in the same predicament. I believe the Assisted Outpatient Treatment Bill will give us one more chance to stop the revolving door. The authority of a Judge telling him to follow his treatment plan, at home, with the help of his parents may be the thing he needs to break this difficult depressing cycle. It’s a chance to keep him home and accept treatment. Please vote FAV on HB576 for Zeb’s sake and for the sake of many people needing help with their illnesses.