

**ORAL TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF
HB576 - Mental Health - Emergency Evaluation and Involuntary Admission Procedures
and Assisted Outpatient Treatment Programs
Health and Government Operations Committee**

Thank you Chair, Vice Chair and committee members for being here today.

My name is Hannah Dixon. I am a social worker with bipolar disorder. In my lived experience and my client base, I have seen the benefits of choice-based treatment and the harms of involuntary treatment. I am here to express my opposition to House Bill 576.

I am a person that received voluntary crisis care. Because of this I was able to pursue my recovery at my own pace, and my education and career in social work. I attribute all of my successes to being given the choice to pursue voluntary treatment.

In 2019, I experienced a psychiatric crisis after ending an abusive relationship that I had been too scared to leave for over a year. I went to the hospital to be admitted inpatient but I was told I did not meet the criteria to be admitted. I began to yell and scream. Within minutes I was surrounded by hospital security. The clinical director entered the room. I spoke to her about how was feeling suicidal.

[PAUSE]

She listened attentively and referred me to a facility voluntarily.

[mini pause]

If she had not listened to me, I would have gone home and taken my own life. I knew I needed support but if I were admitted involuntarily, this would have exacerbated my depressive symptoms, and risked my ability to graduate college, which I ultimately did three months after this event.

[mini pause]

Because I had a choice in my treatment decision - I am in recovery. With therapy and medication, I have maintained wellness, and I will soon be a fully licensed social worker.

I urge you to think critically about the potential harm and trauma of expanding coercive, forced interventions like AOT when there are voluntary, recovery-oriented services available.

I was granted choice and credibility with my treatment during a crisis. AOT will take this choice away from people like me and damage trust with their providers and the services they receive. Trust is integral to recovery, and AOT promotes neither trust nor recovery.

I urge you to oppose this bill.
Thank you for your time.