

Favorable HB576

Melissa Mulreany, Howard County

Feb. 14, 1:00 p.m., Health and Government Operations Committee

The availability of evidence-based Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) could be a life changing tool for our family and friends with serious mental illness (SMI). My personal experience involved a relative who was unaware of his illness due to anosognosia, a neurological cognitive deficit caused by the mental illness, which prevents recognition of one's illness and the need for treatment. Therefore, he refused voluntary treatment.

For twenty years my relative struggled to get and keep a job, but without medications and ongoing psychiatric assistance he was not able to maintain gainful employment or independent living. Had evidence based AOT been available in Maryland to provide treatment, he would not have suffered for so long and been unable to achieve his goals.

After finally getting on medication and psychiatric care, he has gained the ability to understand his illness and the benefits of treatment. He is also now able to hold a job.

Our family could have been spared over twenty years of grief and uncertainty as we struggled to protect him from himself and the ravages of an untreated serious mental illness.

Please support HB576 to add evidence-based Assisted Outpatient Treatment to the options available to mental health professionals and give individuals with untreated SMI (and their families) hope for life as a healthier and contributing member of society.