

HB576 Testimony
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Support

My brother has been sick with schizophrenia for 22 years. His illness has resulted in 4 traumatic violent attacks: on my father, my grandfather, my aunt and my uncle, the permanent disability and loss of employment for my uncle, the loss of a son's relationship with his father, the suffering of my brother with paranoid fears for over 5 years and living homeless on the street for almost a year, the cost to the state of millions of dollars for over 5 years in the criminal justice system and at Clifton T. Perkins Forensic Hospital, and now my brother's homelessness for the second time and families with children, including mine, that continue to live in fear of harm every day.

In his early twenties my brother began hearing voices and became extremely paranoid. My parents could not get him help because he was over 18, and completely unaware that he was sick and refused treatment. **He attacked and choked my father severely.** He agreed to voluntary hospital admission but checked himself out after 2 days because **the inpatient doctors refused to certify him for involuntary admission.**

My husband and I lived with my parents at the time, and on one occasion, because of his delusions **he threatened to kill us in our sleep.** The next day he told us he slept with a butcher knife under his bed in case he decided he needed to kill us in our sleep. The hospital recommended we call the police, who took him to the hospital. However, the **Emergency Room doctors refused to certify him for involuntary hospital admission.**

For our family to be safe, we could not allow him to come home. He was **homeless and on the streets almost a year.** Then my aunt and her family took him in against our advice. My grandfather lived with my aunt, and **my brother attacked him** on one occasion. One evening, **he beat my aunt and her husband in the head with a baseball bat.** Then he calmly called the police and stated he intended to kill them, but couldn't go through with it. **Susan and John were both hospitalized and John will remain on full disability as a result of this attack.**

My brother finally received medication over objection at Clifton T Perkins Forensic Hospital which successfully treated his psychosis. After discharge to an inpatient center, he moved to a halfway house program called Vesta. He **got a job at a gas station which he held for over a year, bought a car, AND mended relationships with his son and the rest of the family.** When all was well in his life again, **He stopped taking his meds.** He moved out of the halfway house program, and got an apartment on his own, so he didn't have to answer to anyone about his mental illness.

Then he started having hallucinations and paranoid delusions again. he was accusing his roommate/landlord of cutting his hair while he was sleeping. He **posted psychotic incoherent words as well as violent and sexually explicit messages on social media including "Feeling cute, think I might kill".** He concocted a plan to be homeless and live in the woods near my family. This sent me into a terrified panic mode, knowing he could show up at my door at any minute while he is psychotic. It made me feel that my children and family would not be safe in our own home.

I called Clifton T Perkins to see if there was any way to have him brought back to the hospital if someone reported that he may be relapsing. I found that he had been released with no conditions, meaning they

had no recourse at this point because **Maryland does not have an Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program like other states, who use prior violence as one possible qualification for admission.**

Research shows that the strongest predictor of violence by a person with mental illness is prior violence.

How can a person who had proven to be violent in the past be released with no follow up or monitoring to make sure that they are not a danger to themselves or to the people around them? How can a person like me protect my family when there is no one who can help until it's too late?

Now my brother has been evicted because of his behavior and is living in his car. My family is still in grave danger and lives in fear.

It is absolutely SHAMEFUL that since 2001, families like mine have been pleading for help from Maryland legislators and administrators to change establish Assisted Outpatient Treatment in Maryland and nothing has been done for 23 years.

I am pleading with each one of you to give a favorable report to HB576 to establish Assisted Outpatient Treatment in Maryland this year to protect families like mine and enable those with serious mental illness to lead safe and productive lives.