

## HB576 Testimony

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Position: FAVORABLE

Our nephew, an orphan, under our care was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia when he was 23, still in college. He lived with us in Gaithersburg, and attended On Track Maryland where he willingly complied with the medication regime, essentially Clozapine. This returned him to the nephew we knew him to be. He continued college and had a job. As is typical to schizophrenic patients, after two years, believing nothing was wrong with him, he refused medication, and for over 18 months he disappeared, wandered around the country, until he was arrested and jailed in Syracuse, New York, then in and out hospitals for the next six years, suffered financial losses and became homeless, wandering the streets stealing food, giving away his possessions until he ended up in a group home that provided him with services under an AOT program. Under this program, he agrees to take his medication, is treated as a human being, and attends monthly sessions run by the county AOT administrator, including his psychiatrist and therapist. We need this program in Maryland. This program means saving lives that otherwise would end up in terrible circumstances. Highly trained mental health professionals throughout Maryland should be allowed this tool to more effectively do their jobs by saving our children, friends, families and preventing unthinkable circumstance that might otherwise occur.

We ask for the committee to issue a favorable report on HB576.