

HB576

Shawn Campbell, Montgomery County

Position: Support (FAV)

My name is Shawn Campbell, MSW, and an employee of Help in the Home, LLC located in Rockville, Maryland. Help in the Home assists clients with severe and persistent mental illness. Our clients live in a safe and secure environment. There are countless Marylanders who do not have the opportunity to live their best lives due to an undiagnosed mental illness, many of whom are resistant to treatment and unaware of the severity of their illness.

HB 576 would help people in many ways to get treatment for those undiagnosed mental illnesses. When someone is struggling with mental illness, they will lack the capacity to recognize their actions and won't have the ability to process reality like you or me. What is unfortunately problematic for someone resistant to treatment is that they tend to self-medicate, thereby becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol to relieve their symptoms and exacerbate their problems.

There is a young man, I will call "Sam", who has walked away from every treatment center his parents have found for him. He refuses to meet with a psychiatrist or therapist or participate in any form of treatment. He is living with his girlfriend, losing weight, and increasingly becoming socially isolated. We are doing our best to monitor his condition for the development of physical/psychiatric conditions that meet the criteria for an emergency petition. Unfortunately, this is a painfully slow process in which we can only merely hope we'll be able to identify BEFORE a fatal tragedy occurs. Our only hope of getting treatment for Sam is through an emergency petition. However, without the passing of this HB 576, the emergency petition will allow for little real progress as it is likely that once he is stable enough to be discharged (i.e. no longer an immediate danger to himself or others) to repeat the same cycle of refusing to go to appointments and decompensating until hospitalization is once again needed. With AOT, Sam would be much more likely to follow up with aftercare treatment, thereby increasing his prognosis for stabilization and recovery.

The State of Maryland stands at the precipice, and the time is now to pass HB 576 which would help those who cannot help themselves. Maryland has an opportunity to set an example and lead the states on how best to handle those who are experiencing mental illness and are refusing treatment. With the passing of HB 576, we could see a drop in healthcare costs associated with people experiencing a mental health crisis who are admitted to the emergency rooms and help to keep them out of the jails, decrease acts of violence in our communities, and give them hope for their future.