

1/24/25

The Honorable Pamela G. Beidle
Chairwoman, Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB43

Position: **Favorable**

Chair Beidle and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of SB 43.

Please allow me to explain briefly how and why the bill will benefit patients and their families.

My son entered a psychiatric facility in Maryland seven years ago. However, it took us six years to learn that a Forensic Review Board meets annually to evaluate his eligibility for release.

We were never informed that the reviews had been scheduled, nor were we allowed to contribute, participate, or have a voice in the planning process. We were unaware of the treatment plan meetings or reports' findings, conclusions, or recommendations. Additionally, year after year, our inquiries about my son's prognosis and the estimated length of his stay were consistently met with a silent response.

Last year, in March 2024, our family learned about the FRB process during an educational program at my son's hospital. The head of the FRB gave an excellent presentation. Many audience members were surprised to find out that reports were available in the Records Department and that patients, along with their authorized representatives or guardians, could access those reports.

After receiving copies of the reports consistently denying my son's eligibility for release, we were saddened to learn that the decisions were based on incomplete and inaccurate information.

For example, one of the findings links my son's poor appetite and weight loss to psychiatric issues. At the same time, data indicate a connection to complications from medication, as supported by medical records and family information.

Another finding describes my son as aggressive instead of noting withdrawal symptoms resulting from abruptly stopping a medication. He adjusted well to reductions that were tapered slowly and in smaller increments.

One recommendation was to put my son through more electroconvulsive shock therapy, even though he had already received 22 treatments. Two medical experts firmly oppose additional ECT due to the potential cognitive harm it may inflict on my son's brain.

Another recommendation for the team to consult with the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center in 2022 and 2023 was not acted upon until 2024.

For all these years, our family believed we were kept updated about our loved one's status and prognosis, yet we were completely in the dark.

I was impressed with the director and believed she aimed for fairness, so I called her to discuss our concerns. She explained that her report is primarily based on the Unit report and the FRB discussion. We have not yet received the 2024 Unit reports. When I told the director that I wished there was a way to provide the missing information for consideration, she suggested that our family could write a letter to the FRB outlining our concerns, which we plan to do.

Thank you for your time. I hope your committee decides to support SB 43.