

Greetings, members of the Health & Government Operations committee,
My name is Diane Shields. I am a NAMI Maryland/Harford County member and Family to Family Facilitator of 5 years that teaches 8-week course to those who care for loved ones diagnosed with mental illness.

I presently have an ex-spouse who attempted suicide this past June. He spent 3 days in the ER after being found by our daughter. He was then transferred to the psychiatric unit and after 3 days I was advised he was being released and to come pick him up. I had provided them with his mental illness history and all of it was ignored. Even his adult children and siblings provided a long history, and nothing was considered until the family had to threaten legal action if he hurt himself or others.

I just do not know what would have happened to other patients who do not have this type of support. It is still an uphill battle trying to find the right mix of medicine to work. Presently he refuses to go back to the hospital and unless he is showing suicidal tendencies, we cannot force the issue. Our family took him to Shepard Pratt yesterday and they at first refused to admit him because after a 10-minute interview, the Intake person decided he was not suicidal.

I once again had to say that I would hold them legally responsible. Caregivers have no say unless they force the issue and know how to do so. He has been admitted now for over 24 hours. No one in the family has been contacted. His therapist has also tried to reach someone at the hospital to explain his psychiatric history. Unfortunately, in my eyes, this leads to an ever-growing number of homeless and violent people in the world. Their family cannot help them.

Thus, the need for the passing of SB43 and HB32.

Respectfully,

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