

**Senate Bill 509: Prohibited Possession of Firearms – Assisted Outpatient Treatment
Judicial Proceedings
February 7, 2025
Position: SUPPORT**

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I am writing to express my support for SB 509, which would restrict access to firearms for patients in Maryland's Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program (AOT).

I am past chair of the Maryland Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention and am on the board of the Mental Health Association of Maryland. After a career in suicide prevention and public health, I retired from the federal government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2018, where I was Lead Public Health Advisor in the Suicide Prevention Branch. However, I am submitting this testimony representing only myself.

I will not repeat Dr. Paul Nestadt's testimony, which details the critical gap created during the passage of last year's SB453/HB576, which established Maryland's AOT program.

I do want to emphasize the need to temporarily restrict firearm access from people under AOT orders, whom the Court has agreed to have demonstrated severe psychiatric illness leading to repeated hospitalizations or violent incidents, and documented non-adherence to voluntary treatment. Research shows that individuals with severe mental illnesses are significantly more likely to die by suicide than those without a diagnosed mental illness. Decades of research also show that reducing access to a firearm during periods of crisis can save prevent suicide, and that is the goal of this bill.

I urge a favorable report on SB509.