



Promoting support, research, treatment, and public policies that improve and save lives

HB 592 Testimony

Health and Government Operation Committee

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From: Evelyn Burton, Maryland Advocacy Chair, Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance

Position: Information

HB592 seeks to address the heightened risk of harm faced by those with severe mental illness (SMI) from suicide, an issue that is often overshadowed by the more controversial topic of violence toward others. Up to 30% of those with psychotic disorders attempt suicide over time and rates of completed suicide are far higher for those with SMI than for the general population. Availability of firearms is a major factor in whether suicide is completed for those at risk due to severe mental illness.

However, research also shows that treatment, including treatment under AOT, significantly lowers the overall risk of violence and suicidal ideation for those with SMI.<sup>1/2/3</sup>

With respect to AOT, we are interested in finding out more about the way this law would be implemented so that we can be assured that it would not impact the willingness of practitioners or individuals to make a referral for AOT, or for individuals to voluntarily enroll in AOT rather than pursue a contested hearing. Our overall goal is to ensure that AOT is available and appealing as a tool to promote continuous care and to avoid criminalization.

#### REFERENCES:

1. DJ Jaffe. *Insane Consequences*. Pg 33
2. DJ Jaffe. *Insane Consequences*. Pg 77
3. Swartz, M. S., Swanson, J. W., Steadman, H. J., Robbins, P. C., & Monahan, J. (2009). New York State assisted outpatient treatment program evaluation. *Duke University School of Medicine*.

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