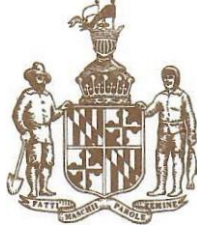


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Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB592 Written Testimony
February 12, 2025

Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Cullison and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Delegate N. Scott Phillips from the 10th Legislative District, and I am here to express my strong support for HB0592. This critical legislation seeks to add individuals under Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) to Maryland's list of those prohibited from possessing firearms—a necessary step to safeguard both public safety and the well-being of individuals receiving AOT.

Maryland law currently prohibits firearm possession for individuals who have been involuntarily committed for inpatient psychiatric treatment, recognizing the heightened risks during acute mental health crises. However, this protection does not currently extend to individuals under AOT, despite these individuals being under court-ordered psychiatric care due to severe mental illness and a demonstrated history of treatment noncompliance. These individuals have been legally determined to require ongoing intervention to manage their mental health effectively.

Many people under AOT, including veterans struggling with PTSD, depression, or other service-related mental health conditions, are at significantly increased risk of suicide. This is not just a mental health issue; it is a public health crisis. Suicide prevention is one of the most urgent challenges we face today. In Maryland and across the nation, the majority of firearm-related deaths are suicides. Research consistently shows that restricting access to firearms for individuals in high-risk mental health situations dramatically reduces suicide rates.

AOT programs are designed to ensure that individuals at risk receive the necessary care and support to stabilize their mental health. However, without corresponding firearm restrictions, the law leaves a dangerous loophole that can have tragic consequences. HB0592 addresses this gap by providing temporary firearm

restrictions for the duration of an AOT order. This measure gives individuals the critical time they need to stabilize, engage meaningfully in treatment, and reach a point where they can safely possess a firearm once again, if appropriate.

This legislation is about saving lives. It aligns with Maryland's best practices in suicide prevention and responsible firearm policy. It is not about stigmatizing mental illness; rather, it is about acknowledging the realities of mental health crises and taking evidence-based steps to prevent preventable tragedies. We owe it to the most vulnerable among us, including those who have bravely served our country, to ensure they are protected during their most vulnerable moments.

I urge the committee to support HB0592 and to stand with us in taking every possible step to protect our communities and save lives.

Respectfully submitted,

Delegate N. Scott Phillips