

Testimony for SB707

February 24, 2026; Senate Finance Committee

From: Joanne Connors, Montgomery County

Position: Support

I was diagnosed with schizophrenia 30 years ago. When I am on medicine you would never know it.

I work full time, exercise, go to book clubs, and fix-up my house just like you. However, when I am off my medicine or on an inadequate dose, I have psychotic delusions and lose any insight that I have a serious illness. Then I refuse treatment of any kind in any setting. When involuntarily hospitalized and provided medication-over-objection, I improve dramatically within 24 hours and again I realize I do need the medication. I tell this story because **I am a firm believer that prompt involuntarily hospitalization for psychosis is the compassionate thing to do for someone with schizophrenia, rather than allowing them to remain psychotic until there is “imminent” risk of “physical” danger.**

When I first fell ill, I took medication willingly and did just fine. Then I thought since I was doing well, I could stop it. I became delusional and lost insight. Because of the current danger standard, it took 2 years for me to be involuntarily hospitalized and receive medication-over-objection. I lost my savings of over \$100,000, lost my job, lost my health insurance, lost custody of my son, and lost my dignity. I suffered delusional mental anguish and emotional pain. I made suicide attempts, something I never do until the illness has progressed to its worst stages. My son witnessed his mom doing “crazy things” and suffered tremendous emotional pain from my eventual abandonment. Nothing scares a kid more than thinking no one will help their parent when they need it.

Four years later, during a medication change, I ended up on a non-therapeutic dose and relapsed. It took a year of me destroying my life once again to be involuntarily hospitalized, because I was not considered sufficiently “dangerous.” I once again lost my savings, my job, my son, and my dignity.

I never want to go through that experience again. The last thing my family and I need when I am ill, is some police officer, doctor, lawyer or judge, denying me involuntary hospitalization, when what I need is to be safely in the hospital and get treatment. Denying me treatment when the illness has robbed me of the ability to make rational decisions about my own care is doing a disservice to me and the community.

I don't take the disservice to the community lightly. The second time I became psychotic, it took me breaking the law and getting arrested before I received involuntary treatment. The illness only gets worse over time if left untreated. Without treatment I live in my own reality with my own rules and laws according to my imagined beliefs. The rules and laws of society mean very little to me. Over time, I get angrier and angrier. Then I start to fight the world. I trespassed at my son's school and wrote a letter to the principal threatening the school if they didn't give me my son back. I didn't become violent, but I believe there is always a possibility I could have if left untreated long enough. So no, **a danger standard that does not include substantial impairment in the individual's ability to make a rational and informed decision about treatment, is not compassionate or medically prudent.** It puts the safety of the person and the community at risk as the illness progresses.

I approach this no different than any illness or trauma that brings an unconscious person to the Emergency Room. I might as well be unconscious – for when psychotic, I am living in a reality all made up by my mind. I want my doctor to treat me as such. I want him or her to facilitate hospitalization where I can receive life-saving medication-over-objection if needed. I don't know of any other illness where someone in the Emergency Room is not provided the lifesaving treatment they need. In short, this is a disease with a biological basis. If a person's cancer was at Stage 0 but the doctor waited until the cancer was at Stage IV with brain metastasis before treating it, that person would be sued for malpractice. But this is what will continue if anyone with an obviously advanced psychotic illness is denied treatment until they are physical danger to themselves or someone else. **Please support SB707.**