

Testimony for SB707

February 24, 2026; Senate Finance Committee

From: Lisa Bass Cooper, Fenwick Island, Delaware

Position: Support

Hello, my name is Lisa Bass Cooper, and I am testifying in support of SB707 on behalf of my daughter, a 39-year-old Silver Spring resident, whom I have legal guardianship of because of her serious mental illness (SMI).

My daughter suffers from schizoaffective disorder bipolar manic type. For the past seven years, she has been hospitalized more than 28 times because of her lack of insight and periodic resistance to medication because of known debilitating side effects.

Most recently, she has learned to go to the hospital for physical complaints when she feels she is slipping into another manic episode. In the past, when she has been resistant to going to the hospital. It has been difficult to get immediate treatment for her psychiatric disorder because of the danger threshold that currently exists at most emergency rooms in Montgomery County. The irony is that if she were treated sooner, she could stabilize sooner, saving the state money and her the trauma of prolonged forceful in-patient treatment to keep her and staff safe. **Instead, this “danger threshold” policy of involuntary psychiatric care puts her at greater risk of escalation of her manic behaviors before she is held against her will for her own good.**

I thought that guardianship would help bypass this situation because the court has recognized she can't make the best judgements when she cycles to the manic behaviors that make her a totally different person. But that has not been my experience.

What policymakers should consider is that mental health is not a one-size fits all. I am sure that people with mild mental health conditions may be well-served by the “danger threshold” but not SMIs like my daughter. She has a documented struggle with medication efficacy and is well known to the system. For others with her diagnosis and their supportive families, the current mental health laws and processes need to be re-examined and changed. SB707 is a step on the right direction. Currently, the danger threshold is allowing the mental health care system to get paid while those they care for continue to suffer. Everyone in the system knows it, but they are not advocating for this because they are getting paid and don't want to “rock the boat.” I have spoken to numerous staff in crisis centers and hospitals who concur with me privately.

I fully support passage of SB707. I believe it will save the mental health system in Maryland critical dollars. It will also help the seriously mentally ill get treatment earlier so they can stabilize sooner and enjoy their lives.

Lisa Bass Cooper

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