

Testimony on Senate Bill 707-Favorable
SB707- Mental Health-Danger to Life and Safety of the Individual or Others-Definition
(Right to Treatment)

Finance Committee

February 24, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Members of the Committee,

As a family member of a person living with mental illness and a member of NAMI Howard County, I am offering favorable testimony in support of **SB707- Mental Health-Danger to Life and Safety of the Individual or Others-Definition (Right to Treatment)**.

Maryland is failing its citizens with severe mental illness and their families. People with untreated severe mental illness fill our jails, live on our streets, cycle in and out of hospitals, and often are victims of violent crime. Passing SB707 can improve this dismal scenario.

SB707 would require a change in Maryland's involuntary evaluation and hospitalization law for serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, making it easier for the severely ill to receive prompt treatment. The current law is simple and vague; hospitalization is allowed only if "The individual presents a danger to the life or safety of the individual or of others." Maryland is the only state (along with Washington DC) that has not defined its danger standard. Too often the law is interpreted narrowly and inconsistently, depriving many of much needed treatment.

I teach NAMI's Family to Family class. Many participants tell the same story: their child/spouse/sibling cannot get care because they aren't deemed "sick enough" even though they refuse to eat, shower, or change their clothes, cannot work or communicate with people, hear threatening voices, and in bouts of mania, go days without sleeping, run up huge credit card debts, and smash holes in living room walls.

Early treatment for mental illness leads to better outcomes. Passing SB707 and expanding the definition of danger will be a lifeline for those affected by severe mental illness. I urge you to support SB707.

Laurie Liskin
4642 Smokey Wreath Way, Ellicott City, Maryland 21042