

Testimony for SB 707

February 24, 2026; Senate Finance Committee

From: Claire Weinberg, Montgomery County, Maryland

Position: Support

My son had Schizophrenia, and he took his own life in 1994.

One of my long-lasting memories is that of my late husband, literally on his knees, crying and begging my son to accept treatment. This was after a year in college, when he was first diagnosed with Schizophrenia. **I don't believe he ever had any awareness of the causes of his suffering (such unawareness is called anosognosia).** Because he was paranoid, delusional and hearing voices, he **refused treatment and never realized that he had an illness.**

Since early childhood Michael was very bright, but fearful. By high school graduation he was tense and sometimes behaved bizarrely. Michael managed to get a degree in horticulture from the University of Maryland, but was too fearful to seek a job. He did some manual work for a friend and odd jobs.

When I moved to a retirement community, discussion of selling our home so frightened Michael that I kept the home for him. By 1994, Michael had deteriorated and was living alone in the house, fearful and withdrawn. He stopped taking care of himself and was unkempt, depressed, paranoid, hallucinating and an utterly hopeless individual. **HE TOLD ME HE HAD ACQUIRED A GUN.** I contacted the Crisis Center to come and get the gun out of the house. They could not or would not.

Michael continued to refuse voluntary hospitalization. With difficulty I petitioned the court for an emergency evaluation. The police took him to the emergency room and the doctors decided **he did not meet the dangerousness standard for involuntary admission.** Michael may not have looked to be a "danger" but he was quite obviously **seriously ill, unable to care for himself, and utterly without hope.** If Maryland law had included the provisions in this bill, he would have been hospitalized and received treatment.

Instead, **two weeks after the evaluation, he shot and killed himself.**

I am 92 now, but I blame myself daily all these many years, for not finding a way to rescue my precious son. But a system that permitted timely involuntary hospital treatment could have saved him. Changing the hospital commitment law to help people like Michael could help prevent future suicides.

Please support this legislation!