

TO: Chair Beidle and members of the Senate Finance Committee

FROM: X. Hawkins

HEARING DATE: March 10, 2026

BILL: SB 549 – Mental Health – Treatment Plans for Individuals in Facilities – Participation of Family Members or Other Individuals (The H.E.R. Continuity of Care Act)

POSITION: SUPPORT (FAV)

To Chairman and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am writing to urge a favorable report on SB549, the HER Continuity of Care Act.

As an individual living with multiple disabilities, I understand firsthand that healthcare is rarely a solo journey. For many of us, "quality care" is defined by more than just a clinical diagnosis; it is defined by a support system that understands our history, our communication needs, and our daily realities.

SB549 is a vital piece of legislation because it prioritizes the following:

Inclusion of Support Systems: This bill recognizes that the involvement of a chosen support system in treatment planning is not just a preference—it is often a necessity for successful outcomes and long-term stability.

Continuity and Stability: For those of us navigating disabilities and mental health challenges, gaps in care can be devastating. This act ensures that transitions in care are seamless and that the "human" element of our recovery is preserved.

Empowerment and Agency: By formalizing the role of support networks, the state empowers patients to remain at the center of their own care, ensuring our voices are heard even in moments of crisis.

My support system is the bridge between my clinical treatment and my daily life. Ensuring they have a seat at the table during treatment planning provides a layer of safety and understanding that a provider alone cannot always offer.

I respectfully ask for a favorable recommendation for SB549 to ensure that all Marylanders have access to the comprehensive, inclusive mental health care they deserve.

Thank you,

X. Hawkins