

Testimony for HB1014

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From: Laura Shears-Carey | 8204 Waterford Road, Pasadena MD, 21122 | 443-410-8975 | lshearscarey@gmail.com

Position: FAVORABLE

I write to you not only as a constituent, but as a grieving mother whose son's life was lost due in part to the limitations of Maryland's current mental health laws.

My son, Joshua D. Carey, suffered from severe and persistent mental illness that included psychosis. Under Maryland law, **he was repeatedly denied life-saving medical intervention because he did not meet the "imminent danger" standard.** Although his illness made him gravely ill and unable to care for himself, he often could not articulate a specific plan to harm himself or others. Because of this, he did not meet the strict legal threshold required for intervention.

As his family, we could clearly see the warning signs. We recognized patterns of deterioration, escalating psychosis, and behaviors that signaled substantial risk long before incidents occurred. Yet, without a stated plan or immediate threat, our pleas for help were met with barriers. The law required proof of imminence, even when substantial risk due to mental disorder and prior history was evident.

My son could not provide for his basic needs. He lacked the cognitive awareness to understand when he required treatment. He was non-compliant with medication — a direct symptom of his illness — which further worsened his condition. Despite my repeated pleas for assistance, we encountered dead end after dead end within our state system.

On July 20, 2023, my son Joshua became an angel.

I firmly believe that his death could have been prevented if Maryland law recognized substantial risk of harm due to mental disorder or prior history, rather than requiring proof of an imminent, articulated plan. SB707 and HB1014 have the power to close this gap — to allow families and professionals to intervene before tragedy occurs, not after.

Since my son's death, I have struggled to function and am unable to testify in person. I carry immense guilt, wondering if I should have left Maryland for a state whose laws would have recognized Joshua's need for care before it was too late. No parent should feel that the only way to save their child is to leave their home state in desperation.

Please, when you consider SB707 and HB1014, remember my son. Remember that behind every statistic is a family who begged for help. These bills have the power to spare other mothers and fathers from experiencing the unimaginable loss of a child due to a system that failed to act in time.

Thank you for your time and for your thoughtful consideration.

A grieving parent of a son who suffered from severe mental illness