

HB 1470 - Mandatory Mental Health Training for first Responders..

As the mother, and volunteer in on various Development Disability Organizations, I am requesting support for the passage and enactment of SB 454

My personal story.

My Name is Glennor Shirley. My 53 year old son, Cornell Smith, has Downs syndrome, with a mental cognitive level of a 2 year old and social level of a 5 year old. His psychological profile says he answers YES to most questions until you realize he does not understand the questions. He loves to look at cars.

One day the police arrested Cornell and placed him in the Howard County Jail.

It was painful to see my son locked in the jail having no idea why he was there, nor the seriousness of his situation.

He was looking at the cars in our apartment parking lot. Someone called the police, to complain about a black man looking into cars.

The police asked him if he was looking for change. He said YES, although at the time he had no idea that change meant money.

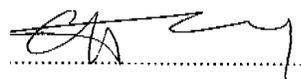
I went to every level of the police department, and brought all his psychological evaluations that identified his cognitive and social levels and the fact he answers YES often without understanding.

The head of the police department eventually withdrew his arrest record and gave it to me. The record had no description of his obvious disability. Prominent were the words: Illiterate Black Male.

Educating the police on all mental issues will reduce the high and costly rate of incarceration and enable more tax payers funds to be directed towards more health and education for all.

On behalf of my son, and all parents and family members with mental issues, I request passage of HB 1470.

Glennor Shirley

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glennor Shirley', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Mother

Advocate for Social Justice

