

Testimony for HB1160

March 9, 2022, 1:30 pm, House Health & Government Operations Committee

From: Laura Landon, Howard County, Maryland

Position: **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT**

The Maryland dangerousness standard failed my son. He fled to California. The California dangerousness standard helped my son, but by then he had committed second degree robbery.

In early December 2021, we started noticing bizarre behavior in our adult son and soon learned it was a “manic episode”, something we were not familiar with and had never witnessed before. Over the course of five weeks, we made five desperate attempts to get him help but the law failed us every time. This included FOUR emergency room visits, each time the doctor explaining that their hands were tied because of Maryland law - he did not explicitly state that he wanted to hurt himself or others. Even after filing an emergency petition, which was granted, the arrest and hospital visit ended in the same way - “we can’t hold him because Maryland law won’t allow it”.

We helplessly watched as his condition and behavior declined dramatically, escalating into severe paranoia, irritability and delusions – with nothing we could do. How can this be?!

Our last attempt was a panicked call to the police, only to have them tell us upon arrival there was nothing they could do... again, he was not “saying” he was a danger to himself or others. The very next day, his untreated mania caused him to flee across the country to California, where Instagram was “going to interview him and take care of him”.

Within days, he was arrested for second degree robbery, believing the innocent store owner to be a terrorist. Horrific! How can Maryland law fail to protect families and communities from such obviously dangerous behavior?

Thankfully, California law has a third criteria for an involuntary hold – “gravely disabled”. This was our only hope and through the facilities there, he was put on a 5150 hold (72 hours), later extended to a 5250 hold (up to 14 days) for stabilization. Finally!

How can this not be a criterion in Maryland?! The family and community were in danger. As tragic as this story is, the consequences could have been worse. ***How much worse does it have to be for the law to change?***

HB1160 would add a gravely disabled criterion to the Maryland danger standard, but it is extremely limited, in that it requires the person to be unable to provide for the individual’s basic needs including health, or safety “due to the persistence of active psychosis, delusions, or hallucinations”. While my son would qualify under this criterion, it would prevent others such as people with anorexia who also cannot care for themselves because of their illness from receiving care. Please pass this bill with an amendment to remove this restrictive provision.