

**Testimony from Rob Wipond in opposition to S.980, "An Act to provide critical community health services." (Sept 7, 2023)**

I'm Rob Wipond, an investigative journalist and author of *Your Consent Is Not Required*, which in part examines how scientific evidence does not show forced treatment helps.

I oppose this bill. It could put people permanently in a chemical tranquilizer jail without due process.

One reason community forced drugging is spreading is because prominent pro-force groups like Treatment Advocacy Center, or TAC, often distort the science and mislead the public and legislators. For example, I'll review a recent TAC report on Assisted Outpatient Treatment, or AOT, "Participant Satisfaction" in Ohio. I've submitted my full analysis.

The most common criticism of AOT is that involuntary drugging produces no benefits and backfires by making people more resistant and afraid about seeking help, while any benefits come from voluntary supports often provided. So it's important to understand what AOT clients experience.

TAC promoted their survey findings with these claims:

- "AOT participants reported high levels of satisfaction and feelings of empowerment"
- "More than three-quarters of participants agreed that they were satisfied"

In fact, none of TAC's survey questions even asked if participants felt empowered. And when AOT clients merely answered that they'd met with court staff and treatment teams enough times and felt "somewhat" comfortable asking questions, TAC described that as participants feeling "satisfied and empowered" by courts and treatment teams.

Meanwhile, most of TAC's questions were multiple choice and asked about the AOT program *as a whole* and *blocked* participants from commenting separately on the voluntary supports versus coercion. TAC also selectively dismissed some answers as showing lack of insight, and avoided asking about drug adverse effects.

Nevertheless, delving more deeply, TAC's highlights omitted key findings.

- Only 20% said AOT helped their well-being, health, or mental health.
- Half felt “angry” and “disrespected”, and 61% disliked the forced drugging, coercive meetings, and threats of incarceration if they didn’t comply.
- 65% said they disliked AOT so much that, even if in future they felt they “needed” help, they still did not want to be in an AOT program ever again.

And these damning responses came from a survey group that wasn’t random—the AOT treatment teams chose the participants and mainly chose those who self-reported as highly medication compliant. So TAC’s own data actually showed that, even among highly medication-compliant people, a large majority disliked the coercion so much that they’d never again want AOT. Forced drugging is torturous and backfires.

Other studies suggest AOT can reduce police interactions, hospitalizations, and minor conflicts—but this appears to be because the support teams help problem-solve difficult situations. That’s great. Collaborative problem-solving can be done without threatening and forcibly drugging people.