

I believe Massachusetts has been a leader in advocating for civil and human rights of mental health patients, such as in your "Fresh Air" rules, which ensures that psychiatric patients can enjoy fresh air and sunlight during their treatment. Sadly, there are no such laws in most states, including here in New York State, and both of my daughters suffered from long hospitalizations in which they were deprived of the basic right of fresh air and sunshine that even convicted murderers are given by law.

Over the years I have been appalled at many of the coercive, ill-advised and inhumane things foisted upon them, purportedly "in their best interest". My youngest daughter was utterly decimated by forced treatments which contributed to her tragic death in 2021, and my older daughter has suffered many very debilitating side effects from such "treatments".

The term "assisted outpatient treatment" is in my opinion a euphemism for a system that effectively extends the coercive and often harmful practices of psychiatry after involuntary commitments into the community. It also adds to stigma, implying a person is dangerous and "treatment-resistant". It was recently invoked against my older daughter, even though she's never harmed anyone and has been consistently and actively involved in treatment with her therapist and psychiatrist. I believe it has helped lock in toxic over-medication, contrary to her well-being and recovery.

As a retired school psychologist, I can tell you no such involuntary, draconian measures would ever be tolerated in the public school system.

For all these reasons, I encourage you to reject S1115 An Act to provide continuum of care for severe mental illness.

I am all for a "continuum of care", but such care should be voluntary, personalized, humane treatment, with truly informed consent, that respects individuals' autonomy, civil and human rights, and dignity.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my experience and submit these comments to the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Russell Stence