

WHY MANY MASSACHUSETTS FAMILIES **OPPOSE S.2973**

An Act to provide continuum of care for severe mental illness

Families are the most consistent, lifelong support for people with psychiatric histories.

Parents and caregivers **oppose expanding involuntary outpatient commitment** (or Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT)) because it often **damages family relationships and relies on a flawed assumption**: that a court order can succeed in place of trust, services, and relationships.

SERIOUS CONCERNS INCLUDE:

- **AOT expands an approach that doesn't work at the expense of funding programs that do work**

Families know that judicial authority doesn't change outcomes—effective services do. Independent, unbiased studies show *no significant outcomes improvement for people under AOT* compared with those in comparable voluntary services. S.2973 diverts precious state resources away from evidence-based programs that actually work, such as **Coordinated Specialty Care (CSC)** and high-fidelity **Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT)**.

- **AOT often alienates people from family, friends and providers**

Regardless of who petitions the court, *AOT frequently creates division* between families and their loved ones as **parents describe being blamed** and **facing permanent estrangement** following forced or court-ordered treatment.

- **AOT is a part of an outdated system achieving very low rates of recovery**

Our current mental health system struggles with recovery rates around 5%. AOT has *not* changed that picture, whereas **newer approaches** in other countries, and in **existing MA programs, achieve recovery rates of 65-80%** and more. And, most importantly, when the system continues to fail, the *individual* under the court order is held accountable, *instead* of the system.

- **AOT unfairly hurts those who seek voluntary services**

AOT orders push people seeking voluntary treatment further down the waiting list. This leads to a cycle where people struggling must wait until they are *fully* in crisis before accessing support. **System failures are masked, not solved by court orders.**

- **AOT inequitably impacts families of color**

Families are deeply concerned that *AOT has been disproportionately applied to communities of color* elsewhere, **increasing surveillance and legal entanglement**—not just for individuals, but for entire families and communities.

Conclusion:

Families urge the Legislature to reject S.2973 and invest in proven, voluntary, relationship-based mental health services that recognize a simple truth: Policies should not break the relationships that recovery depends on.